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## The Nuclei of Discontent

B. Jane Overmoe

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THE NUCLEI OF DISCONTENT  
by

B. Jane Overmoe  
Bachelor of Science, Mayville State University, 1978

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for degree of

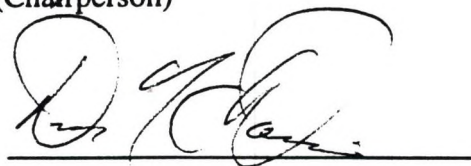
Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota  
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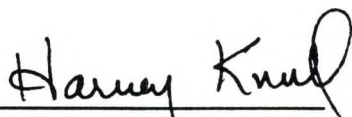
This thesis, submitted by B. Jane Overmoe in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

  
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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.



Dean of the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to disclose a dramatic political event in drought-stricken North Dakota during the so-called "Dirty Thirties." After completing a Communist investigation for the Americanism Committee of the American Legion Auxiliary for the Department of North Dakota, Agnes Kjorlie Geelan began speaking engagements to inform the public about the results of the report and to persuade members of the American Legion Auxiliary to act upon the information. This study specifically analyzed the rhetoric of Geelan's "Nuclei of Discontent" Address at the American Legion Auxiliary State Convention in June 1932 in Devils Lake, North Dakota.

To provide a design to study the rhetoric, Kenneth Burke's dramatistic approach was used. By using Burke's pentad, the critic considered the economic background of northwestern North Dakota in the Depression (Scene), the function of Geelan's speechmaking (Purpose), what took place in the rhetoric (Act), the background of Agnes Kjorlie Geelan (Agent), and what strategies the agent used to motivate listeners to pursue patriotism (Agency). Burkeian analysis allowed the critic to examine each component of the pentad to find what methods of persuasion were used by the rhetor.

The pentadic approach revealed that Geelan was a dynamic speaker with superior organizational skills and a keen political sense. This speech, early in her

career, demonstrated Geelan's ability to motivate and provide alternatives for social change, at grass roots levels, for North Dakotans.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND AND METHOD

Studies by and about women have gained increased visibility in the communication discipline. However, women's speeches have often not been preserved in cultural records. Any review of the literature of American public address revealed a startling lack of attention to women speakers. Brigance (1938), Brake (1967; 1973) and Pederson (1981) studied and acknowledged the near exclusion of women among the great orators in American public address anthologies. Pursuing the need for inclusion of women among great orators, Yoakam (1937) and O'Connor (1954) made significant contributions to the study of early pioneer women orators.

There were few, if any, critical studies concerning women political leaders from North Dakota. Spanning over seventy years of political activism in the state of North Dakota, the rhetoric of Agnes Geelan was worthy of critical study because the addressed issues had historical import, the rhetoric had immediate impact on the thinking of the times and the speech, "The Nuclei of Discontent" took place on a significant occasion where circumstances focused attention on the speech.

Because of her polished platform speaking, Agnes Geelan was a key figure in several local, state, national, and international socio-political movements. It was the intention of the research to investigate how she constructed socio-rhetorical discourse. By studying the persuasion of Geelan's speech, this study offered an enriched



understanding of rhetorical strategies and relevant historical issues. As McIntosh suggested, "rhetoric can be studied not by asking if women say anything important, or if there are any great women speakers, but by asking what women say, how women use the public platform, how women speak" (Spitzack and Carter, 1987).

In June 1932, newly elected American Legion Auxiliary President Agnes Kjarlie Geelan spoke before the organization's state convention in Devils Lake, North Dakota. Geelan was first identified with the work of the North Dakota Auxiliary in 1930 when she was Americanism chairperson. Citizens of North Dakota became concerned that Communism was gaining a foothold in the state. An unpatriotic element in society surfaced due to the economic situation. Depression and drought were contributing factors in aggravating the situation. With the permission of the North Dakota Governor Shafer and the Department of Public Education, Geelan made an investigating trip into the afflicted areas and joined the forces combatting Communism. Geelan returned from the investigation and spoke to statewide audiences about the conclusions of her report. The Devils Lake, North Dakota American Legion Auxiliary keynote address summarized the investigation and offered solutions to ease the tension of North Dakota citizenry created by the economic hardship. This thesis analyzed Geelan's efforts of persuasion.

The methodology used in this analysis was the dramatistic pentad of Kenneth Burke. The Burkeian pentad categorized an event into five areas. They were Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. The Act named what took place in thought or deed. The Scene was the background of the Act, i.e., the situation in which it

occurred. The Agent indicated what person performed the Act. The Agency was the means or instruments the person used. The Purpose gave the reason for engaging or influencing. Kenneth Burke's pentad provided an analytical tool for discovering and examining motives as a way of understanding why human actions take place and as a way of understanding symbolic acts.

By implementing Burke's pentad, drama was used in a rhetorical criticism format. Burke believed that a dramatistic view of people is needed in all of the human disciplines, for human behavior cannot be understood without it. Burke distinguished humans by their symbol-using behavior, the ability to Act. The Act, according to Burke, was the basic concept of dramatism.

As a rhetor, Agnes Geelan sought to delay the spread of Communism in northwestern North Dakota by counterattacking with an argument of her own. With the American Legion Auxiliary as a vehicle, she began a flag education program to counter the Communist infiltration in northwestern North Dakota during the Depression.

A linguistic analysis was to discover and name the strategies Agnes Geelan used to identify with her audience. According to Burke, a speaker used language which demonstrated the similarity of interests (identification) to achieve a state of mutual concerns (consubstantiality). In order to achieve consubstantiality, the speaker employed linguistic strategies. Geelan's rhetorical strategies will be discussed in Chapter VI: Agency.

As the basis for analysis, actual speech transcripts from Geelan's personal files found in the Agnes Geelan Room at the Community Center, Hatton, North Dakota were used. In addition to the 1932 "Nuclei of Discontent" text, portions of the American Legion Auxiliary Communist Report, co-authored by Geelan will be analyzed. A partial transcript from a four-hour video-taped interview with the Agnes Geelan in July 1988 was included in the appendix for verification.

In the following chapters, the five divisions of the pentad will be used as a framework for rhetorical analysis. Chapter Two will explain the Scene of the event focusing on the political atmosphere in the Depression years in North Dakota. Chapter Three will focus on Agnes Geelan, the Agent. Chapter Four will describe the Act. Chapter Five will look at Geelan's Purpose for the speech. Chapter Six will explore the strategies Geelan used as part of the Agency. Chapter Seven will summarize the findings and propose further study.



## CHAPTER II

### SCENE

Scene, according to Burke, was a blanket term for the concept of background or setting in general, a name for any situation in which Acts or Agents are placed (Holland, 1955). The Scene consisted of extrinsic factors which move the Agent forward.

The factors in the Scene which propelled Geelan to Act include the Communist attempt to recruit children by forming youth groups using anti-American rhetoric. Another factor was the propaganda campaign used by the Communists to gain memberships during depressed economic times. Next, analysis of international, national and state scenes will be introduced.

The mood of the people in the United States was essentially isolationist in 1928. Except at the diplomatic level, the country appeared to back away from its international responsibilities. The United States was represented at international meetings of the League of Nations and the Pan Am Conference.

By June 1931 United States President Herbert Hoover proposed that all nations declare a one-year moratorium on all inter-governmental debts and reparations. Hoover was motivated by American bank failures and the effect on international finance. The moratorium was short-lived as Great Britain went off the gold standard on September 21, 1931. Eight hundred and twenty-seven United States banks were

closed in 1931. By February 1932, a world disarmament conference began in Geneva, Switzerland, sponsored by the League of Nations. The United States did not belong to the organization but sent representatives. In Germany, Adolf Hitler ascended to power (Schlesinger, 1983).

On the national Scene, in July 1932 President Hoover signed the Relief and Re-Construction Act allowing monies to go to state and local agencies to support public works and relief. Because of the failed banks, President Hoover was blamed and lost his bid for re-election. The nation was in a state of economic collapse and Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared at the Chicago convention, "I pledge you, I pledge myself, a new deal for the American people."

In the November 1932 election, Roosevelt received 22,809,638 votes; Hoover, 15,758,901 votes; Socialist Norman Thomas 882,000 votes and Communist William Foster 103,000 votes. The American people were desperate and wanted reasonably traditional solutions for the domestic problems (Schlesinger, 1983).

The Scene in North Dakota a decade before the Depression revealed the establishment of the Industrial Commission, the Bank of North Dakota, the State Mill and Elevator Association and the State Home Building Association. In 1921, Governor Frazier was recalled from office. In 1922 the North Dakota Wheat Growers Association was founded and WDAY went on the air. By 1925 Arthur Sorlie became governor and in 1929 George F. Shafer, a Republican became governor (Jelliff, 1988).

The political Scene in the 1920s in North Dakota was a struggle for control of the Republican party. The people in the Nonpartisan League and the conservative Independent Voters' Association battled to get nominated by Republican party members and to hold state offices. The Democratic party remained weak, and many Democrats joined with the IVA to fight the Non-Partisan League. When the state legislature met in 1925, Republican Governor Sorlie was faced with opposition from two sides. The more radical League members of the legislature wanted him to expand the state industries. The conservative IVA members wanted him to close down and sell "the socialist mill" and the bank. Governor Sorlie had "to walk a narrow political line" during the session.

During 1928, the IVA took political control of the state while the League did better in the congressional races. The League was able to elect two senators, but two of the three U.S. representatives from North Dakota were anti-League members. The 1920s in North Dakota were the beginnings of re-adjustment. The pioneers "created too many farms, too many towns, too many schools, churches and colleges, too many counties and too much government, too much railroad mileage, too many banks and too much debt" (Robinson, 1963). Considered a central theme in North Dakota's history, the "Too Much" mistake saw a painful re-adjustment to "inescapable realities grounded in the nature of the country" (Robinson, 1963).

North Dakota farmers, who were the majority of workers in the state, turned more and more to forms of cooperatives. The Farmers Union formed the Northwest Organizing Committee and in 1927 concentrated in North Dakota. The Farmers Union



committee sent out crews of organizers to make a farm-to-farm canvass in each county on a fact-finding mission.

According to historian Jelliff (1988), when the Great Depression hit the United States in the 1930s, North Dakota was already in economic chaos. Along with the drop in the price of wheat, the value of land declined. Farmers were caught in an economic squeeze. They had to pay off mortgages, contracted in better times, on land that had lost considerable value. With no help from the federal government in sight, farmers tried to solve their own problems by joining cooperatives, such as a Wheat Growers Association. However, nothing seemed to help. By 1929, the state was suffering a severe farm depression; but the worst was yet to come.

On the opposite end of the spectrum were the Communists who offered "food, clothing, and shelter" to farm families that were suffering economic depression. During the 1920s, North Dakota remained Republican during a Republican decade. The Non-Partisan League continued to wage a war against the IVA. Voter apathy was at its highest, with only half of the voters going to the polls in 1930. This situation was a turning point in North Dakota history and thus began grassroots involvement, such as Geelan's, to create social change in the state.

Because Geelan was a woman working for social change with permission from the state of North Dakota and Governor Shafer, along with the American Legion Auxiliary, it was critical to understand the role of women in an activist role during this time. The historical documentation in the Scene was taken from a male perspective. It was important to also include a discussion about women's history and

how it related to Geelan's view of activism. The critic considered where women have been situated in history and what was Geelan's source of motivation.

Adrienne Rich (1980) stated that each wave of interest in women's lives is "received as if it emerged from nowhere: as if each of us had lived, thought and worked without any historical past of contextual present. This is one of the ways in which women's work and thinking has been made to seem sporadic, erratic, orphaned of any tradition of its own."

It took hundreds of thousands of years to develop the very simple cultures that we find in remote parts of the world, and longer still to develop the great civilizations to which our own modern civilization is heir. Historically, the central pattern of the family and the division of labor between the sexes survived; men went out from the hearth for food, to protect, to conquer, to explore and to organize. Women stayed near the hearth, cared for the young, and prepared the food. Generations later much has been added to the pattern; a new concern for the welfare of the poor, the orphaned, and the sick surfaced and the roles women played were various; as widows, nuns, nurses, and teachers. Time allowed traditional roles to widen (Mead, 1962).

Today's women were inheritors of this tradition: of women who left their homes to extend the services once performed within the home to the wider world outside. Where do women stand in the world view of things? If we are to have a world in which human beings can live, it is more scientific activity that we need, not less. Women must take their places in a world about which they are learning more. Two courses were open to them: to take alternatively or sequentially, or both

together: to become the teacher-mothers of infant scientists or to engage in immediate scientific activities as teachers, researchers, planners, engineers and therapists (Mead, 1962).

Friedan (1963) stated that the only way for a woman, to find herself, to know herself as a person, was by creative work of her own. She learned to compete, not as a woman, but as a human being. Scott (1984) added that the ideal would be to read about what women have thought and felt about life, men, children, art, and religion and read works of Sappho and Mead. Diaries, memoirs, letters, and poems of women who were trying make sense of their experience are critical artifacts to be studied and may have a subtle effect upon a woman's whole image of herself and her future life.

Geelan ventured from the hearth to unknown counties to create change. She was driven by intense patriotism and a passion to make society a better place to live.

The international, national and state scenes were threatened by economic upheaval and patriotism weakened. Agnes Geelan created rhetoric to change the way people were responding to Communist propaganda.

According to Geelan (1988), it was known by the state's political leaders that Communism was in North Dakota. "We knew they were in the state. The Executive Committee asked the school board in Enderlin if I could get two weeks off and go and investigate. So I investigated the Communists in 1930 and 1932."

There is a potential heroine in everywoman. She is the leading lady in her own life story on a journey that begins at her birth and continues through her lifetime. She is shaped by her choices, her capacity for faith and love, by her ability to learn



from experience and make commitments. She acts as the heroine-protagonist of her own myth (Bolen, 1984).

When Geelan ventured to the depressed area of northwestern North Dakota and eastern Montana, she entered a myth-making public arena. She began a public service career that she was unaccustomed to, like many women of her time. Committed to the Auxiliary's public agenda and her personal agenda as a public servant, Geelan's participation proceeded because of her platform abilities.

When women turned away from the inward-staring circle and used their new energies to confront and restructure the institutions in which they live and work, they discovered a new power in themselves that came from participation (Friedan, 1963). By understanding where the role of the female speaker has been placed in history and where the role of the female speaker will journey toward in the future, perhaps this research can unfold some new truths.

In order to understand the speaking event, the critic identified external forces that led to the speech. North Dakota citizens were faced with economic and political hardships during the Depression years. The economic situation was played out in the worst drought ever recorded. North Dakota, an agricultural state, saw many of its farm families driven to bankruptcy. Since the farm economy was tightly woven with the politics of the state, there was potential for a party to offer the farmers an alternative, Communism.

It was only to be expected that with such an alternative, the Communists would again resume their activities. That was the history of Communism--where there was

suffering, unemployment, disturbances of any kind, there you will have active Communists (Geelan, 1932). Information began coming in to the Americanism Committee of the Auxiliary from Unit members, Department officers, newspaper reports, and other sources that the Communists were steadily gaining ground and that the matter caused the people in the northwestern section of North Dakota considerable anguish.

The two extrinsic factors that contributed to the Scene that the Americanism Committee sought to find were:

1. Was the Communist party active in the state a part of the national and international communist party?
2. What were the aims and beliefs of the Communists working in North Dakota? (Geelan, 1932).

The specific scene of the speech took place on a Tuesday morning, June 1932 in Devils Lake, North Dakota. The event was the American Legion Auxiliary State Convention. Geelan spoke in a church.

"And I talked from the pulpit. And I really was moved and there weren't many dry eyes. And I was crying and most of the people in the audience were crying. I really felt, this was a great experience" (Geelan, 1988).

In the following chapter, the external forces and the internal motivational factors of the Agent, Agnes Kjorlie Geelan, will be considered.



## CHAPTER III

### AGENT

The second part of the pentad to be explored was that of the Agent. The Agent performed the Act. The background and personality of the agent must be discovered. Qualities of the agent and internal motivation of Agnes Geelan during the early years of her public speaking career will be disclosed. By exploring her early childhood and parental influences, Geelan's personal value system and her communication abilities will be analyzed.

According to Geelan (1988), her pioneer parents were religious. "They built the churches before they built the schools." Her father displayed qualities of self-confidence and her mother was shy and humbling. Neither parent had public speaking experience, although they were involved in numerous community and church activities. Geelan's parents were Wisconsin natives who came to Dakota Territory in 1879. Born May 28, 1896 to Harold Kjorlie and Jane Halvorson on a farm near Hatton, North Dakota, Agnes Kjorlie's favorite game to play as a child was funeral. With her brothers, she would find some dead insect or rodent and proceed to bury it. During the burial, it was always Agnes who would deliver the eulogy (Geelan, 1988). Agnes Kjorlie's first attempts at developing public speaking skills began at Hatton High School under the supervision of speech teacher/administrator Oscar Erickson. A pivotal experience occurred during her sophomore year in high school when she

decided to quit school after being offered three different jobs. The jobs were at the post office, the telephone office, and the drug store. The high school superintendent stepped in when he heard about the job opportunities and offered Agnes Kjorlie a position on the debate team for the following school year. But she would have to return to school.

According to Geelan (1988), "an offer like that was like being first string for the Vikings today. Debate was the high school extracurricular activity that stressed critical thinking." It was not easy for her. She had adjustments to make to be able to compete with the other high school students. One obstacle was to improve her English pronunciation. Throughout elementary school training, most of the children at that time in Hatton, North Dakota, including Geelan, spoke Norwegian. Another adjustment that Kjorlie had to make was to improve her extemporaneous speaking skill. Geelan recalled that the students had to think on their feet, using no notes during the arguments and only a few notes during the debate rebuttals. Geelan acknowledged teacher/administrator Oscar Erickson for her effective public speaking training. "Anything I have done, and speaking had something to do with everything, I can thank Oscar Erickson and high school debate".

As a high school junior in 1913 she was a member of the debating team along with classmate Carl Ben Eielson. Eielson, known as the "Good Samaritan of the Sky", pioneered airmail service in Alaska and was known for rescue missions in the Far North. Eielson succeeded in flying the first trans-arctic flight from Point Barrow, Alaska to Spitsbergen, Norway.

In 1913, the debate subject was "should the post office department establish parcel post." The Hatton (N.D.) High School team finished second in the state competition. In 1914, Agnes Geelan was again a member of the debate team and the subject that year was "should the state of North Dakota establish a state mill and elevator." The Hatton (N.D.) High School debate team captured the state debate competition.

Graduating from Hatton High School, Agnes Kjorlie attended Mayville Normal School for one year in 1915. Commenting on the experience, Geelan stated that "the teachers at Mayville taught me how to teach, and the community taught me public service."

In a 1988 article for the Mayville (N.D.) State University alumni organization, Geelan remarked about the training she received at Mayville Normal School. "All of the classes were methods-oriented and while the emphasis was on how to teach, every instructor taught by example and by preaching, that teaching was the most noble of the professions. It was one of those instructors who first told me, a teacher lives in the lives she has molded" (Geelan, 1988).

Two role models for Agnes Kjorlie at this time in her young life were two women from her hometown of Hatton. One was the wife of the town's doctor, Mrs. Hegge, and the other was the wife of the town's dentist, Mrs. Kjelland. According to Geelan, both of these role models were community leaders who displayed an image of elegance and sophistication. These two women were educated, artistic and civic-minded.



During a span of twenty years (1915-1935), Agnes Kjorlie Geelan taught in several North Dakota communities including Oberon, Lankin, Mayville, Carrington, and Enderlin. In Oberon, she remembered an unusual county agent who urged her to get involved in community activities; she followed his advice. From Oberon High School and Lankin High School in 1919 Geelan journeyed to Mayville High School where she taught under the supervision of Oscar Erickson, her former speech teacher and superintendent at Hatton. Before she was asked to teach at Mayville, Erickson had asked Kjorlie to work for the Women's Suffrage Association as a field worker. By the time Kjorlie had arrived at Mayville State, the women's rights amendment had been ratified by Tennessee, the last state. From 1920 to 1923 Agnes Geelan taught school in Enderlin. In the year 1924 she was a student at Concordia College in Moorhead and from 1924-26 she taught in Carrington.

On May 26, 1926, Agnes Kjorlie married Elric Geelan from Enderlin, North Dakota. He possessed an eighth grade education but was a voracious reader. Agnes Geelan called him "the great stimulator" in her life. They were married for forty-one years until his death in the mid-1960s. Since Elric Geelan was a member of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, his wife found a niche by serving with the Auxiliary for the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. She served as the national vice-president and traveled nationwide promoting the organization. According to Geelan, it was at this point that she developed her public speaking ability. She learned how to keep the outline of a speech in her head and how to improve her extemporaneous skills.

From 1926 through 1935 Agnes Geelan was a teacher in the Enderlin school. She joined the American Legion Auxiliary and the Ladies Auxiliary to Railroad Trainmen. In 1928 she was the American Legion Auxiliary Chairman of an investigation of Communists in North Dakota. Her duties were reported in statewide newspapers:

Mrs. E. C. Geelan of Enderlin, Americanism Chairman of the North Dakota America Legion Auxiliary, is directing the cooperation of her organization with the Legion and other patriotic and civic organizations, in the observance of the George Washington bicentennial anniversary. Through the unit chairmen, national and department plans for this celebration are being carried out. Citizenship clubs are being organized and campaigns to eliminate illiteracy inaugurated. Programs paying tribute to Washington also are a feature of auxiliary meetings this month. On the opening day of the observance, February 22, Mrs. Geelan will be heard from WDAY, Fargo, at 8:30 p.m. one of many programs planned for that day. One of the main features of the Americanism work is the essay contest being conducted among the junior and senior high school students in the state. The subject is "Keeping America American," and cash prizes will be awarded to district and state winners. (The Enderlin Independent, October 9, 1952)

In 1932 she was the State Vice-President of the American Legion Auxiliary and gave a report concerning the 1928-30 Communist investigation. The speech text

was included in the appendix of this paper. In 1934 she was the North Dakota State President of the American Legion Auxiliary.

From 1935 through 1946 Agnes Geelan continued her active role in civic duty. She became the vice-president of the national Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and was field worker in seven western states. She was a Democratic candidate for state representative but resigned when she was named State Director of War Bonds. During World War II she was a bank cashier in Enderlin. During this period she was also elected to the Enderlin School Board.

Agnes Geelan decided to run for mayor of Enderlin, was elected after a dramatic campaign and served from 1946-54. Geelan was the first female to serve as a mayor in the history of North Dakota. Several unique distinctions occurred while Geelan was mayor. An excerpt from the state capitol's newspaper, The Bismarck Tribune, explained:

That this "petticoat" government is a successful one is shown by the accomplishments already attained in Enderlin since Mrs. Geelan took office. The city had inadequate electric service due to the breakdown of the power plant and failure of the Ottertail Power Co. to install an emergency plant. The city council refused to renew the franchise and street lighting contract when it came up for renewal last year, and as a result since November 1, 1947 Enderlin has had a working emergency plant and will have in operation a white way for the business center by June 1, 1948, the white way to be instilled at the



expense of the utility company, and sold to the city at the end of ten years for a dollar. (The Bismarck Tribune, February 5, 1949)

Another distinction during Geelan's mayoral years included a Health ordinance. A Health ordinance has been enacted providing for the inspection of restaurants with the result that every restaurant now operating has a Grade A or B rating for the required time limit, or has complied temporarily until such restaurant will be able to secure necessary equipment ordered but not received. (The Bismarck Tribune, February 5, 1949)

Still another distinction concerning trade between city and rural citizens was accomplished during Geelan's mayoral reign:

Realizing that the business and prosperity of a city depends on promoting trade with farmers, Mrs. Geelan recommended and carried out a street improvement program and snow-plow policy to guarantee passable highways. By August 1 the town will have forty blocks of resealed hard surfacing and fifteen blocks of new paving. (The Bismarck Tribune, February 5, 1949)

Nor had the Enderlin young people been overlooked. The Enderlin youth took charge of the city administration for a day. Geelan began a cooperative with various civic groups for recreational opportunities for the youth of Enderlin.

The High School Seniors took over the city for a day, broadcast over WDAY and acted as the city officers for the day. They had a council meeting, were sworn in to their respective offices, took complete charge, and conducted all the affairs of the city for a day. (The Bismarck Tribune, February 5, 1949)

It was during this time that countless opportunities arose for her to speak publicly. Agnes Geelan, along with Dr. S. B. Hocking, ran as Non-Partisan League candidates for the United State House of Representatives in 1948 against Usher Burdick and Otto Krueger. She was defeated but garnered 57,000 votes statewide. During the next campaign for a state senate seat, she traveled to every farm home in the district and ousted a five-term incumbent to become the first female state senator in the history of North Dakota. Winning the primary by only 67 votes, the victory became a turning point in the political career of Agnes Geelan because she was now a legitimate candidate with legitimate concerns for her constituency. She served as state senator from 1950-54.

Agnes Geelan was candidate for Congress twice - once in 1948 on the Non-Partisan League ticket and a second time in 1956 with the backing of the newly merged Democratic/Non-Partisan League. She became the first female from North Dakota to run for a national office. From 1952-61 she served as the national legislative representative of the Ladies Auxiliary to Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

In 1952 she was named secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Non-Partisan League. She was a delegate to the 1956 and 1960 Democratic National Conventions. Her political activities earned her the accolade in 1960 of the North Dakota Democratic Woman of the Year. Also in 1960 she was named state director for COPE (Committee on Political Organization). Agnes Geelan was appointed by Governor William Guy to serve as the first woman commissioner and chairperson of the North Dakota Workmen's Compensation Bureau, serving from 1961-71.



In 1963 she organized the first North Dakota Status of Women Committee and was named chairperson of the group. Geelan resigned from the post of Workmen's Compensation Commissioner in 1964, due to Mr. Geelan's failing health. In 1966 Governor William Guy asked her to return to the Workmen's Compensation Bureau as chairman, which she did. However, in 1971 she resigned as chair when she turned 75. Also in 1971 she was elected as a delegate to the Constitutional Revision Committee. She chaired the Rules Committee for the North Dakota Constitution Revision Convention in 1971-72.

Agnes Geelan's writing career began as a journalist writing editorials entitled "With the Women" for the Bismarck newspaper, The Leader, during the 1950s.. Most of the writing pertained to the political happenings statewide, book reviews, and local events. In 1969 she wrote a fifty-year history of the North Dakota Workmen's Compensation Bureau. In 1973 she became a student again when she attended North Dakota State University, where she took several English courses. At the age of 79, she wrote a biography about former North Dakota Governor and United States senator William Langer. The book was titled The Dakota Maverick. The first edition was published November 1, 1975 and was completely sold out by December 15, 1975.

Agnes Geelan continued her political activism by being a member of the North Dakota Coalition, a political action group. She was elected a delegate to the Houston Women's Convention in 1977. Meanwhile, the paperback edition of The Dakota Maverick was announced. Also, Carlton Subsidy Printers agreed to publish and sell

her first novel, The Ministers' Daughters in 1982. In 1984, the sequel, Pine Cove Revisited was published by Kaye's Publishing Company, Fargo, North Dakota.

In 1985 Agnes Geelan delivered a speech to the planning party for the North Dakota Centennial. The planning party was a bi-partisan effort to organize North Dakota's 100th year of statehood. The 1987 video-taped speech was used to advertise for the Centennial.

Geelan's most recent efforts have been directed toward the peace movement. Her vision was to establish an academy where young Americans would study how to live with global enemies. Agnes Geelan longed for the day when there would be total nuclear disarmament. In 1988 at age 92, Geelan visited the United Nations General Assembly's Third Session on Disarmament as a representative for the League of Women Voters. In the July 4, 1988 issue of Newsweek magazine concerning 50 heroes from 50 states, North Dakota's representative was Agnes Geelan. The article stated, "Agnes Geelan poses one of those nagging questions that sounds simple, then complicated, then simple again the more you think about it: why does the United States have academies devoted to war and not to peace?"

In a series of newspaper articles and letters to the editor, Geelan proposed the United States establish a pacifist counterpart to its military academies, a United States Peace Academy. There, cadets, nominated by members of Congress, would be required to learn foreign languages and cultures.

In 1989 she continued with the peace work and participated with the Fargo-Moorhead Communiversity at Concordia College, Moorhead Minnesota. In

May 1989 she received a doctor of Humane Letters at the spring commencement at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. The diploma read:

You have been a teacher, a mayor, a school board member, North Dakota's first woman state senator, a member of many governmental bureaus and commissions, and twice a candidate for Congress. In recent years, you have become one of our state's best known authors. What you write about North Dakota history has been commercially successful. But more important is the fact that you embody North Dakota history. You have acted in it, and not just watched it. Only slightly younger than North Dakota yourself, you are a fitting symbol of this state at its Centennial. From a proud past filled with achievements, you live with the spirit of tomorrow, making the most of each moment and always preparing for the future. We honor you today on the basis of your entire life, lived and being lived, non-stop, in dedication to the community, state and world for the betterment of humanity. In recognition of your accomplishments, the University of North Dakota is proud to confer upon you the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

The life description of Agnes Geelan revealed exemplary civic contributions. Geelan dedicated decades of public service in various capacities as teacher, mayor, organizational leader, senator, and author. By looking at a life history, Geelan was revealed as politically motivated to change the world for humanity's sake, not her own. Throughout her public service career, Geelan responded with themes of patriotism and child welfare. Agnes Kjorlie Geelan died in March 1993.



Although "The Nuclei of Discontent" speech was early in her career, Geelan was influenced from her years as public schoolteacher and her duties with various civic organizations. Her passion to persuade others to get involved and to work toward progressive goals continued throughout her life. The next chapter, Act, or what Geelan did, will be discussed.

## CHAPTER IV

### ACT

Kenneth Burke's pentadic approach to rhetorical criticism attempted to discover the motive on the part of the Agent that, in turn, produced the Act. The 'Act' was the event in which the Agent engaged. The Act by Geelan was rhetoric created from the Communist investigation.

In the investigative report, Geelan asked several questions about the Communists because "the greatest concern of the Committee in this investigation was the schools and school children, and this phase of the investigation received the greatest consideration" (Geelan, 1932).

The questions included:

1. Have the Communists gained any headway among the children?
2. Did the children who were organized, or whose parents were Communists attempt to influence other children?
3. Do they bring their Communist beliefs into the schools and school associations?

An investigation at Belden, North Dakota found the Communist children's organization active. The Legion and Auxiliary members from Van Hook asked non-Communist farmers if attempts to brainwash the children had occurred. "Without single exception every farmer and farmer's wife interviewed in this locality told the

Committee, attempts had been made and were being made to influence the other children" (Geelan, 1932).

According to the 1932 investigative report, the children were taught to be aggressive and to spread Communist propaganda in every way possible. Notes containing Communist doctrines were given to the children. During class discussions, Communist children attempted to voice their beliefs. With the exception of two teachers, who lost their jobs because of their pro-Communist activities, most of the teachers were found to be intensely patriotic.

A bus driver recounted his efforts to stop Communist discussion on the way to and from school. The bus driver stated, "How can I tell, how can anyone tell whether they have influenced my child? How can I tell until my boy is ready to make decisions for himself whether he has been influenced by this propaganda?" (Geelan, 1932).

The investigative report documented how a mother relayed an incident about a Communist child ridiculing her child for going to Sunday School and also told the child there was no God. A teacher told the Committee that there were regular weekly meetings at Belden where a school for Communist instruction was held. This report was verified by other people in the locality. One farmer expressed, "They have given up on the old people and are now working on the children, and are using games and socials as a means to attract the young people" (Geelan, 1932).

Thus, the information that Geelan collected for the American Legion Auxiliary and the state of North Dakota became the source for her speechmaking. The

documentation of testimonies by the people in the stricken area were used as examples of how the Communists were influencing the children in the area.

During Geelan's speech she challenged listeners, "if you and I are to be successful in the defense of these principles we must know what this organization is doing and where it is active. . . we must meet its activities (Communism) with more effective counteractivities."

Geelan offered to loan a detailed report of the investigation. In the introduction she stated, "I shall try to give you a general idea as to the aims of the Communists, the meetings held, the organized groups of Communists in the state and as much general information as time will permit."

According to Burke, the Act was what took place "in thought or deed", any conscious or purposive action. The Communist investigation caused Geelan to give a patriotic plea at a convention of war veteran widows, spouses, sisters and daughters. Burke explained the causal relationships as "any Act being treated as part of the context that modifies the subsequent Acts." The actions of the first Act became the background of the second Act.

The initial Act for Geelan was the Communist investigation into northwestern North Dakota. The second Act was her attempt at persuasion. To accomplish her goals as rhetor, Geelan explained the aims of capitalism and Communism and then proposed a solution to the Communist infiltration. To do this, Geelan used statistics and examples from her compiled report, Report of Communist Activities in North Dakota 1930-1932 (See Appendix B).



Geelan described the aim of her oratory as a counterattack on Communism from a capitalist point of view. Her speech included the background and sources used in the investigative report. Geelan's references included copies of The Producer News and letters written by students, parents and teachers in the investigation area. A personal survey was also included. Geelan's proposed solution was the Flag Education Program, designed and developed by the American Legion Auxiliary members so that reinforcement of patriotism from a capitalist viewpoint would be implemented.

The first Act proved that Geelan was an investigator. The results of the report included election tabulations, an example of a Communist funeral, and compiled facts about legislative and gubernatorial candidates. Coverage also included testimonials from children and teachers in the stricken area. The first Act from Geelan's investigative report was summarized in her report:

Nine days were spent in this personal investigation, and practically every minute of every day, from 8:30 A.M. to 12 P.M. was spent in interviews, meetings and visiting schools. Four counties were covered: Burke, Divide, Mountrail and Ward in North Dakota and Sheridan County, Montana. Sheridan County was included in the survey because The Producers News is published at Plentywood, Sheridan County, and a Communist School was held at Plentywood during 1931, at which several North Dakota children were enrolled. Considerable time was spent in several cities in those counties and in communities where the Communists were reported as being active. Those



cities were Bowbells, Flaxton, Columbus, and Powers Lake in Burke County; Crosby in Divide County; Stanley, Belden, Van Hook and Parshall in Mountrail County; Minot in Ward County and Westby and Plentywood in Sheridan County, Montana. At five of these places, meetings were held with the Auxiliary Units and Legion Posts: Bowbells, Crosby, Stanley, Van Hook and Minot. In only one county could arrangements be made to give patriotic talks in the rural schools. Burke County, and seven schools were visited: Clayton Consolidated School, Bowbells; Scandia School #1, Flaxton; Rural School #3, Flaxton; Rural School #4, Flaxton; High View School #2, Powers Lake; Battle View School #1, McGregor; Short Creek Consolidated School, Portal. Two high school assemblies were addressed: Bowbells High School and Crosby High School.

Geelan made her argument against Communism. Using statistics and testimonials, the structure of the eleven-page speech ended as a one-sided persuasive effort. It was not known if this speech was given more than once in its entirety.

At the beginning of her speech, Geelan made a plea about children, orphans and veterans to her audience. She said, "When we clothe a needy child, alleviate the suffering of a veteran in the hospital, insure an education for war orphans, we are safeguarding these inalienable rights for our fellow-beings and as we safeguard them for today, we transmit them to posterity."

Geelan transformed the social concerns faced in North Dakota's economy to the patriotic makeup in her audience. She remarked that becoming activists concerned

about the outbreak of Communism in northwestern North Dakota was a civic duty for the Auxiliary members.

Geelan's sources of information included a considerable amount of communist literature, a subscription to The Producers News and a letter writing campaign to Auxiliary Unit presidents. In her address to Legion Auxiliary members, Geelan made reference to her sources of information: "In every community an attempt was made to interview as many persons, as many professions and classes of individuals as possible, to get a true and general report of conditions. . . County superintendents, city superintendents of schools, teachers, county nurses, county agents, ministers, editors, general merchants, garage men, Red Cross workers, U.S. Custom officials, mail clerks, and farmers were among those contacted."

Geelan pursued the investigation with great zeal and with a sense of mission. She went to the people of the area to find out the details for her investigative report, which in turn produced the rhetoric. Her motives for doing so will be discussed in the next chapter, Purpose.

## CHAPTER V

### PURPOSE

The main Purpose of Geelan's rhetoric was to persuade American Legion Auxiliary members to create and implement flag education programs in North Dakota schools. Purpose, as an aspect of Burke's pentad, referred to the reason for the Act and its potential function. Burke believed that the ultimate goal of any speaker was "to promote social cohesion and to perfect society" (Holland, 1955).

Along with the long range Purpose, the speaker may also have some short range Purposes that will help to combat Communism. By examining the minor goals of Agnes Geelan's march against Communism, the critic gained insight into her motivations. What the critic revealed was the personality of the speaker, the accomplishments she intended to make, and how well Geelan understood her audience.

Geelan's Purpose for this speech was two-fold: she wanted to persuade the public about the Communist infiltration and she wanted to inform them about a flag education program for North Dakota youth. In the next chapter, the method Geelan used to fulfill these purposes will be analyzed.

Geelan's main Purpose in delivering the Auxiliary address was to cast doubt among listeners about the Communist threat in depressed northwestern North Dakota. She specifically referred to revolution as the ultimate aim of the Communists. She



mentioned the 1930 election handbills, The Producer News, and the ultimate female threat to democracy, Mother Bloor.

Geelan warned listeners that every demand they make, abolishing mortgages, taxes, interest payments, and shipping rates on farm products would create immediate relief for impoverished farmers and that these demands would lead to final Communist revolution.

To further her argument about the Communist entrenchment in the state of North Dakota, Geelan carefully used the statistics she had gathered during the investigation of 1930-32. She discussed the record of meetings held in the state within an eight-month time span and found that there had been 46 public meetings in different communities in nine counties. She found there were five Communist organizations established in North Dakota. United Farmer Leagues had been established in three counties. Youth Section Leagues had been formed in Burke and Mountrail counties. Three squads of the Pioneers, a youth league, were reported at Belden, in Mountrail County

Besides attempting to inform the American Legion Auxiliary members, Geelan sought to vilify the Auxiliary. Geelan denounced Communists, particularly The Producer News. Geelan stated that "you have to read an issue to really appreciate what a vicious sheet it is." She continued that The Producer News called the Boy Scouts, "messengers of the capitalists in the next war." The Producer News called Congress "the greatest slaughter machine ever assembled in Washington." And, it called the Hoover administration, the "Hoover Hunger Movement".

Geelan said that the entire paper, from beginning to end was a gospel of hatred and discontent. She stated that this was the paper that has 37 workers in the state of North Dakota and that it was the only paper coming into many homes in eastern Montana and western North Dakota.

Geelan informed her audience that the election returns of 1930 and the primary returns of 1932 revealed pertinent facts. In 1930 the Communist candidate for governor received 5754 votes. Nine counties gave the Communist candidate five percent or more of its total vote and one county gave eleven percent. The Communists then decided to endorse only one candidate for sheriff in three counties. The candidate lost by only one hundred votes. Geelan's point was clear. The Communists would have the law in their own hands.

Geelan's use of exaggeration was apparent when she compared the Communists to the capitalists and drew the two sides for the audience. On one hand there was democracy, on the other hand there was revolution.

The Purpose defined what the Agent hoped to accomplish in the Act. Geelan's Purpose was to instill in her audience a response so that they would endorse the American Legion Auxiliary agenda for a flag education program for North Dakota youth. In the next chapter, the fifth part of the pentad, Agency, will be discussed.



## CHAPTER VI

### AGENCY

The fifth part of the pentad, Agency, revealed the strategies the Agent used in the act. It was in this phase that the Burkeian critic found the principal task, studying "what took place in thought and deed" (the speech). Centermost in this type of analysis and interpretation was a scrutiny of symbolical or linguistic devices and language patterns (Thonssen, Baird & Braden, 1970).

According to Burke scholar Virginia Holland (1955), a strategy was an "associative grouping of ideas which work together to express an attitude" (p. 446). A persuader worked to seek a change in attitude by using specific strategies. Attitude strategies were appeals to needs, interests, goals, values and beliefs from persuader to listeners. By locating the strategies Geelan used in The 1932 "Nuclei of Discontent" speech, a better understanding of the Scene, Purpose, Agent and Act can be gained.

The central metaphor in this speech was reference to the nuclei of discontent. According to Webster's dictionary, nuclei was "a central or essential part around which other parts are grouped or collected." Geelan attempted to focus on the depressed area and its potential as a breeding ground for Communism. The nuclei was the Communist party and its workers in the Pioneers, the youth leagues and the United Farmers League. The discontented were the farmers and laborers in the economically depressed northwestern part of the state.

By implementing strategies of emotional appeal, Geelan attempted to motivate the listener so as to cause a change in attitude or behavior. Using examples and narratives as types of evidence, Geelan hoped to arouse feelings such as fear and guilt. Fear.

Geelan used basic emotional strategies with appeals to child welfare and patriotism using fear. Perhaps Geelan's greatest emotional appeal concerned the children in the afflicted counties. By using the theme of either saving or sacrificing the children, Geelan was able to impress upon her listeners the gravity of the situation. During the speech she explained her greatest concern as investigator and appealed to her audience who consisted of wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers:

The greatest concern of the committee was in regard to the children. At Belden where we know of a number of Communist organizations among the children a most careful investigation was conducted. The Legion and Auxiliary members of Van Hook and Belden who were known Communists and who had children attending the schools at which there were known to be Communist children. Without a single exception every farmer in the locality told us that attempts had been made and were being made to influence other children.

(Geelan, 1932)

Also in the speech Geelan used a question and answer that she had documented to make her point about what was happening and what the unknown factors were regarding the Communists. A farmer was asked about how far the Communists had

infiltrated the youth in the county. The farmer replied, "How can I tell?", he said, "How can anybody tell whether they have influenced my boy until he is old enough to make decisions for himself?" (Geelan, 1932).

Probably the most dramatic point in Geelan's speech came when she recalled the funeral of a fourteen-year-old girl from Plentywood:

You may have read accounts of the Communist funeral at Plentywood, Montana. They advertised that funeral themselves, invited the public to attend, called it a Bolshevik funeral, even published the program and the funeral talks. It is almost impossible to believe that anything like that funeral could take place in this country, much less in our very midst. Into the Farmer-Labor Temple of Plentywood, with its red and black Communist drapings, thronged with both curious spectators and Communist sympathizers, they brought the body of that fourteen-year-old girl, Janis Salisbury, daughter of the Montana Communist organizer. The body was escorted into the hall by the Pioneers, young Communists, and after the coffin had been brought to the front of the hall, it was covered with a red flag. No religious hymns were sung; The Red Flag, "The International", "We Young Pioneers are Gay", were the funeral songs. The funeral talk was not given by a minister, but by Erik Bert, editor of The Producers News.

Geelan's strategic use of fear by describing the death of a child to Auxiliary members was to create empathy for other children, including the children of the listeners themselves.



Geelan then quoted the editor of The Producer News eulogy:

Janis was fourteen-years-old. Tho' young in years, the resolute proletarian spirit inspired her. Our Janis was delirious for many hours in the hospital. In her delirium she talked of THEY. We all know who THEY are. THEY are the oppressor, the exploiters, those who doom to death the toilers whom they can exploit no longer. THEY are our class enemies. We are of the oppressed--THEY, the oppressors. Our dear young Janis was of us; flesh of our flesh, spirit of our spirit. Our dear young Pioneer gave us the watchword by which we must live. The nurse tried to ease her thirst by washing out her mouth. Her father told her she must not drink the water. She said, "No, Daddy, I won't. I swear it by the Revolution." This was her holiest vow, and so dying, our young Pioneer Janis, said, 'I swear it by the Revolution.

After reciting the excerpt of the eulogy where admission by the child's father that Janis would receive no nourishment because of some capitalistic conspiracy, Geelan next spoke of the effect that this funeral would have on the children in attendance: "And do you know what the conclusion of that funeral was? Around the open grave, these ten, twelve, fourteen-year-old children concluded the ritualistic ceremony by pledging allegiance to the red flag" (Geelan, 1932).

### Guilt.

Geelan continued using irony, equating death and dying to Communism, and immortality and infinite good to a capitalistic society. She said, "What effect will such a ceremony have on these children, standing in the presence of death, hearing

nothing of filial love of God or immortality, hearing only expression of class hatred and pledging allegiance to a flag whose symbolism is class hatred and class war" (Geelan, 1932).

Geelan's next attack on the Communists was about organized groups forming in the state. She said,

Young Communist Leagues have been formed in Burke and Mountrail counties and during the months of November and December a Young Communist League school was held in Plentywood with graduation exercises on December 19. Two-thirds of the students, numbering about 30, were from North and South Dakota. The Pioneers is the organization of the very young children. Three squads are reported at Belden in Mountrial county. The Communist Labor Sports Union is the athletic organization and we know of two such groups, one at Belden and one at Epping. (Geelan, 1932)

By giving such evidence to her audience, Geelan emphasized the urgency of the situation with the children of the infiltrated counties.

### Conflict.

The contrast of good versus evil, Communism versus capitalism was utilized immediately. In any drama, conflict is essential. By drawing on the strategy of extended example about the funeral and from lay testimony from fathers and community leaders, Geelan effectively pursued her purpose. By reviving shared beliefs of patriotism and a capitalistic society she justified the action of her proposed flag education program.

Geelan used inclusive nouns to emphasize the collectivism of listeners before her. Examples of inclusive nouns were: "our own American Legion Auxiliary", "Our child welfare", "we clothe a needy child", "we are safeguarding", "we transmit them to posterity", "we must meet its activities", "our state", "information which we have", "we have access to considerable Communist literature", "our letters", "we had expected", "our investigation", "we have another source of information", "we know a number of Communist organizations", "Do we need to fear", "our laws", "we need to fear it", "we need to do something about it", "our Legion posts", "our committee", "If our members would go", "our Americanism program", "our posts and units", "we are apathetic", and "the more nuclei of discontent we have in North Dakota".

Geelan told stories that highlighted group achievements. For instance, she said, "If our members would go out in these schools and put on simple programs of music, flag education, plays, patriotic readings or other work; if the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops could be formed among these rural children. . . "

Geelan referred to common enemies and/or heroes. In a "we versus them" argument, Geelan was adept at clearly drawing the battleground line. Her speech began using many inclusive nouns and then she began the "they" bashing. Examples of this include: "Every demand they make", "they make no secret about it", "They ask their members", "They instruct their members", and ". . . how firmly are they entrenched in this state?"

Geelan identified compelling reasons to overcome listener caution and to promote the flag education program. To do so, she used strategies that seemed



practical and reasonable. Geelan introduced this idea: "If our members would go out to these schools and put on simple programs of music, flag education, plays, patriotic readings or other work. . . if every rural school could have a visit from a patriotic squad from our posts and units, say about twice a year. . ."

Geelan stated, "Isn't it a sad commentary on United States citizenship that our patriotism is something that will rise to high heights during war and sink to low levels of indifference during peace?"

Analysis of the text revealed several clusters that appeared consistently throughout Geelan's speaking. The first cluster was the battle cluster. The second cluster was the religious cluster.

#### Battle cluster.

Geelan used words like antagonistic, against, destroy, overthrow, destruction, revolution, war, bloodshed, demand, abolishing, death, hatred, entrenched, vicious, slaughter, hunger, sacrifice, crush, broken, danger, and contempt to create the illusion of war for her listeners. She implied that Communism was negative and that negative force violated rules and laws and consequently was destructive.

#### Religious cluster.

To capture the religious interests of her listeners, Geelan used words and phrases like for God and country, against God and country, a Bolshevik funeral, Farmer-Labor Temple, religious hymns, funeral talk, minister, ritualistic ceremony, filial love of God, religious man, church, presence of death and God and immortality.

These positive terms reinforced renewal of patriotism, activity and fervor that was blessed with love, joy and hope.

Geelan established the conflict of Communism and capitalism and instilled emotional appeals of fear and guilt, to propose her plan of action for North Dakota youth and the future generations in the Auxiliary organization. She strategically utilized terminology to enforce the idea of conflict between the two entities of Communism and capitalism. For the Communists, she referred to battle terms. For the capitalists, she referred to the religious terms. She successfully drew the sides in her persuasive attempt for a flag education program. In the final chapter, the findings of this analysis will be summarized and a discussion of further research will be proposed.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to determine rhetorical strategies Agnes Geelan used in the 1932 "Nuclei of Discontent" address. The framework used to organize the criticism was Kenneth Burke's pentad. By looking at each aspect of the pentad, Scene, Agent, Act, Purpose and Agency, Geelan's strategies and the Purpose of the speech was identified.

In Chapter One, the merit of the "Nuclei of Discontent" speech was discussed. Two factors played significant roles. One factor was that Geelan was a female speaker during a time when female speakers were rare. The second factor was that the topic was political. The two factors combined to strengthen Geelan's support with grassroots North Dakotans for possible political campaigns.

Chapter One also discussed the Burkeian method of analysis called the pentad. The pentad provided a framework for analyzing the communication event. Burke's dramatistic approach for rhetorical criticism stated that a persuader must identify concerns with the concerns of the audience. In order to achieve this consubstantiality, or the state of mutual concerns, the speaker must use linguistic strategies that appeal to listeners.

In Chapter Two, the Scene of "The Nuclei of Discontent" speech was discussed. Geelan had established herself as a public servant during the Communist



investigation. She was a state American Legion Auxiliary officer during the 1932 address and displayed strong speaking skills. The relevancy of the topic to the international, national and local Scene was discovered.

Chapter Three, the Agent, found that Agnes Geelan was a woman driven by patriotic passion to lead the American Legion Auxiliary organization in combatting Communism. Her beliefs included that children must be educated about democracy and its process. Her strongest belief was that freedom must prevail over Communism. The study also found that Geelan was a prolific speaker, adept at communicating her message. Geelan presented a strong image to the Auxiliary members.

In Chapter Four, the Act was Geelan uniting a women's organization consisting of war veteran spouses, mothers, daughters and sisters to counter Communist activities in North Dakota. In order for the persuasion to take place, Geelan ventured to depression-stricken northwestern North Dakota to investigate Communist activities and then presented findings to her audience in Devils Lake in June 1932.

Chapter Five discussed the Purpose of The "Nuclei of Discontent" speech. Geelan felt a sense of urgency with the communist infiltration. As a public servant, Geelan also felt a sense of obligation to warn her listeners and provide a plan for counterattack.

Finally, Chapter Six, Agency, found that Geelan was a master of emotional appeal. She appealed to the common person, freedom and patriotism to demonstrate the need for the flag education program. Geelan sought to create support from American Legion Auxiliary members to uphold democracy and fight Communism.

This study has shown that Agnes Geelan was motivated to act because of her personal beliefs about the democratic process and education. Geelan attempted to denounce Communism by using emotional appeals. By completing this analysis, a better understanding of Geelan's persuasion and the interrelationships between various categories of the Burkeian pentad have been gained.

Several areas of further investigation regarding Geelan's career have surfaced. These areas would extend understanding about the rhetoric and the political life of Agnes Kjorlie Geelan.

First, a study about her newspaper columns "With the Women" from the Bismarck newspaper, The Leader could be reviewed. An analysis of these writings could bring forth understanding of female perspective in a print medium during the late 1940s and 1950s in rural America.

Second, an analysis of Geelan's 1948 Congressional campaign could be studied. The rhetoric of an address, "The Farmers Speech", could be used or perhaps some of the campaign literature could be analyzed. This type of analysis could give insight into the Non-Partisan League and Geelan's role in the political organization.

Third, a study about Geelan's peace activism could be done. Since Geelan encompassed nearly 75 years of political activism and chose to work toward global peace in her later years, a study could be done to analyze her communication style.

In conclusion, since the Burkeian method allowed for a wide scope of interpretations, this study has some limitations. For example, because of the scope of political livelihood of the subject, it was difficult to narrow what were important

factors in Chapter III, Agent. Another limitation was the method itself. Although the Burkeian method was flexible as a system of rhetorical criticism, its definitions need precision. And finally, the guidelines established for criticism have been designed mostly by male critics. Hopefully, in future rhetorical criticisms, methodology created by females concerning women's rhetoric will be adopted.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
THE NUCLEI OF DISCONTENT  
ADDRESS BY MRS. E.C. GEELAN  
AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN  
TUESDAY MORNING  
STATE CONVENTION  
DEVILS LAKE, NORTH DAKOTA  
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
JUNE 1932

I have here the aims of two organizations in the state of North Dakota. the aims of the one organization can be condensed into these simple phrases: "For God and Country we associate ourselves together to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy." The aims of the other organization are stated just as briefly: "We fight against the capitalist democracy in America. Our aim is to establish a Communist society."

On the one hand we have the aim of our own American Legion Auxiliary, for I believe that the entire program of our organization is covered by that brief extract from our Preamble. Our child welfare, rehabilitation, national defense, community betterment programs are but practical interpretations of the safeguarding of the principles of justice, freedom and democracy. When we clothe a needy child, alleviate the suffering of a veteran in the hospital, insure an education for a war orphan, we are safeguarding these inalienable rights for our fellow-beings, and as we safeguard them for today, we transmit them to posterity.

Absolutely antagonistic to our program is that of the other organization, the Communist Party. If I may use the phraseology of their Preamble, it can be stated thus: "Against God and Country we associate ourselves together to destroy the principles of justice, freedom and democracy, and to transmit to posterity a Communist society."

We have, then, in the state of North Dakota an organization attempting to destroy the very principles that you and I are organized to defend. And if you and I are to be successful in the defense of these principles we must know what this organization is doing and where it is active. Where it is, there must be in greater number and with greater force; we must meet its activities with more effective counteractivities. That is why the Department of North Dakota has made an intensive study of Communist activities in our state and it is a brief summary of this investigation that I have been asked to give at this time.

The investigation has been conducted by the Americanism Committee in cooperation with the Child Welfare Committee, this committee furnishing funds for a more complete and personal survey. The personal survey was conducted by Mrs.



Stenson, District Committeewoman of the Fifth District and myself. This report is possible because of the splendid cooperation given the Committee by the officers and members of the Legion and Auxiliary, particularly of the Fifth District.

The information which we have in regard to the Communist situation in our state had been gained from a number of sources. First, we have access to considerable Communist literature distributed in our state. In addition to this material, the committee subscribed for The Producers News, official newspaper of the Communists in this section, and another North Dakota weekly, friendly to Communism. Then, too, letters of inquiry were sent to Unit Presidents in the northwestern part of the state, asking them if Communists were active in their communities and if they were holding meetings and distributing literature. The answers to our letters of inquiry revealed far more extensive activities than we had expected. A report of the situation was made to our Executive Board and the Board authorized a personal investigation.

Nine days were spent in this personal survey, in interviews, meetings with posts and units, and in visiting schools. Four counties were covered in North Dakota: Burke, Divide, Mountrail and Ward, and Sheridan County in Montana. Sheridan County was included in the survey because The Producers News is published in Plentywood, Montana, and a Communist school, at which several North Dakota children enrolled, was held in Plentywood during 1931. In every community an attempt was made to interview as many persons, as many professions and classes of individuals as possible, in order to get a true and general report of conditions. Special efforts were made to interview officials, state, national and local, and in the case of private citizens being interviewed, these names were given to us by Legion and Auxiliary members as responsible people who were close to the situation. County superintendents, city superintendents of schools, teachers, county nurses, county agents, ministers, editors, general merchants, garage men, Red Cross workers, U. S. Customs officials, mail clerks, and farmers were among those contacted.

I can only cover the results to our investigation briefly. A detailed report had been made by the committee and while the expense made it impossible to make a copy of the report for each member of the Department, if any of you are interested, I shall be more than glad to loan you a copy. I shall try in these few minutes to give you a general idea as to the aims of the Communists, the meetings held, the organized groups of Communists in the state, and as much general information as the time will permit.

First, what are the aims of the Communist party? Why are the Communists, here in the United States, and in the State of North Dakota? There is one thing commendable about the Communists--their frankness. Communism has but one ultimate aim, and they make no secret about it. That aim is the overthrow of our present social, religious and political order, and the establishment of a Communist society. Destruction of democracy, establishment of Communism. That is the purpose of the Communist Party of the United States, of Germany, of England, of Canada, of China, yes, of North Dakota as well. Revolution, complete absolute revolution!

The election handbills distributed in North Dakota in 1930, from which I quoted at the beginning of my remarks, all their literature, every issue of The Producer



News, bear our this ultimate aim of the Communist Party. It is stated with dramatic simplicity in this pamphlet "the Election Platform of the Communist Party, U.S.A.": "We aim to secure victory through civil war." Mother Bloor, when questioned at a meeting in Columbus, as to how the Communists expected to realize their aims made this statement, "Legislation is too slow, but we think we can accomplish our aims with very little bloodshed."

Every demand they make--abolishing of mortgages, of taxes, of interest payments, of shipping rates on farm products--their demands for free this and free that, are, and I quote directly, "measures of immediate relief, and demands leading up to the final revolution." They ask their members to salute the red flag. Why? To wean them away from allegiance to any other flag but that of Communism. They instruct their members to take the law in their own hands. Why? Because they must build up the belief that the only law is the law of Communism. I mentioned a few moments ago the frankness of the Communists; they make no attempt to conceal their aims; on the other hand, they go out of their way to advertise them. You may have read accounts of the Communist funeral at Plentywood, Montana. They advertised that funeral themselves, invited the public to attend, called it a Bolshevik funeral, even published the program and the funeral talks. It is almost impossible to believe that anything like that funeral could take place in this country, much less in our very midst. Into the Farmer-Labor Temple of Plentywood, with its red and black Communist drapings, thronged with both curious spectators and Communists sympathizers, they brought the body of that fourteen-year-old girl, Janis Salisbury, daughter of the Montana Communist organizer. The body was escorted into the hall by the Pioneers, young Communists, and after the coffin had been brought to the front of the hall, it was covered with a red flag. No religious hymns were sung; The Red Flag, the International, We Young Pioneers Are Gay, were the funeral songs. The funeral talk was not given by a minister but by Erik Bert, editor of The Producer News. I should like to read a few words from this talk:

"Janis was fourteen-years-old. Tho' young in years the resolute proletarian spirit inspired her. Our Janis was delirious for many hours in the hospital. In her delirium she talked of THEY. We all know who THEY are. THEY are the oppressors, the exploiters, those who doom to death the toilers whom they can exploit no longer. THEY are our class enemies. We are of the oppressed--they, the oppressors. Our dear young Pioneer Janis was of us; flesh of our flesh, spirit of our spirit. Our dear young Pioneer gave us the watchword by which we must live. The nurse tried to ease her thirst by washing out her mouth. Her father told her she must not drink the water. She said, 'No, Daddy, I won't. I swear it by the Revolution.' "

And do you know what the conclusion of that funeral service was?

Around the open grave, these ten, twelve, fourteen-year-old children concluded the ritualistic ceremony by pledging allegiance to the red flag. What effect will such a ceremony have on these children, standing in the presence of death, hearing nothing of filial love of God or immortality, hearing only expression of class hatred and pledging allegiance to a flag whose symbolism is class hatred and class war.



A businessman of Plentywood who had attended the funeral told us his impression of the whole thing. He said, "I am not a religious man; I don't attend church, but at least in the presence of death I think of God and immortality. That funeral affected me as nothing has ever affected me in my life."

Now how firmly entrenched are they in this state? In order to cover the field hurriedly, I will only be able to give you a few facts. We kept a record of meetings held by the Communist Party in this state during an eight-month period, September 1931 to April 1932, and found that 46 public meetings had been held in different communities in 9 different counties. That may not be all the public meetings held, but we do know of that number. In addition to these 46 meetings, in Belden, where they have a town hall used almost exclusively by the Communists, they hold a meeting every Sunday; in Minot during the winter months they had weekly open forums. But these 46 meetings are exclusive of these weekly meetings at Minot and Belden.

As to organized groups. The Communist party has a large number of subsidiary organizations, over 50 such organizations active in the United States, appealing to various trades and ages. Five such organizations have been organized in North Dakota. Communist United Farmers Leagues have been organized in three counties: Burke, Mountrail and Ward, and county organizations of these leagues have been perfected in Burke and Mountrail Counties. Then there is the Youth Section of the United States Farmers League which has followed quite closely its parent organization in this state. Young Communist Leagues have been formed in Burke and Mountrail counties and during the months of November and December a Young Communist League School was held in Plentywood with graduation exercises on December 19. Two-thirds of the students, numbering about 30, were from North and South Dakota. The Pioneers is the organization of the very young children. Three squads are reported at Belden in Mountrail county. The Communist Labor Sports Union is the athletic organization and we know of two such groups, one at Belden and one at Epping.

In addition to these organizations, we have another source of information as to the extent of which the Communists have gained a foothold in the state. The Producers News during the first of the year had a subscription campaign and each week published a list of workers with the number of subscriptions sent in by each worker. A careful record was kept for January, February and March, and it was found that there were 37 workers in North Dakota sending in subscriptions and these 37 workers lived in 19 different communities in 10 different counties. The subscription orders sent in at any one time by one individual ranged from 1 to 12 in number. No names were checked if they sent in a request for only one subscription unless they were repeaters, because the single subscription request would obviously not mean much.

Just a little in regard to The Producer News. You have to read an issue to really appreciate what a vicious sheet it is. It calls the Boy Scouts, "Messengers of the capitalists in the next war"; it ridicules the 4-H clubs; it ridiculed the Lindbergh case, calling Lindbergh "a clerk of the house of Morgan"; it called Congress "the greatest slaughter machine ever assembled in Washington"; it called the Hoover



administration the "Hoover Hunger Movement"; almost without exception every issue warns against war--capitalist war directed against Soviet Russia; every move in Washington is a move (and I quote verbatim) "to prepare to sacrifice millions of workers and farmers lives and the lives of their wives and children in an attempt to crush the Soviet Union, our heritage and our hope." The entire paper, from beginning to end, is a gospel of hatred and discontent. That is the paper that has 37 workers in the state of North Dakota. That is the only paper coming into many homes in eastern Montana and western North Dakota.

The election returns of 1930 and the primary returns of this years' also reveal pertinent facts. In 1930 the Communist candidate for governor received 5754 votes. Nine counties gave the Communist candidate 5 per cent or more of its total vote, one county giving 11 per cent of its vote. This spring the Communists announced that they would have a full field of candidates in the Primary. Then they decided to endorse only candidate for sheriff in three counties. you can readily see why they want their own sheriffs. No more meetings broken up by the law; the law in their own hands. Just imagine what conditions would be like if they had control of the law enforcement. They announced their purpose very frankly in The Producer News, and running on such a platform, mind you, Arvo Jusa, Communist candidate for sheriff of Mountrail county received 464 votes and James Pearson, running in Burke county, received 661 votes.

The greatest concern of the committee was in regard to the children. At Belden where we know of a number of Communist organizations among the children a most careful investigation was conducted. The Legion and Auxiliary members of Van Hook gave us the names of the farmers living in the vicinity of Belden who were not Communists and who had children attending the schools at which there were known to be Communist children. Without a single exception every farmer in this locality told us that attempts had been made and were being made to influence other children. One farmer expressed the general opinion when he said in answer to our questions "do you feel there is any danger of the Communists and the Communist children influencing your children?"

"How can I tell," he said. "How can anybody tell whether they have influenced my boy until he is old enough to make decisions for himself?"

That briefly, is the situation in this state. Do we need to fear Communism in North Dakota? Yes! Absolutely! When any organization can come into this state, can maintain permanent headquarters, can organize farmers into its farm organizations and children into its children organizations, can teach its members to have utter contempt for our laws, can plead for the defense of a foreign power, can circulate its own newspapers widely, can openly announce that it is out to destroy our government in civil war, with bloodshed if necessary, I say, when it can do these things and get away with it, we have something that needs to be feared. Yes, first we need to fear it, and then we need to do something about it.

What has been done in the state? Here is what they did in Divide County. A Communist meeting was scheduled for Noonan. The Legion members attended and quietly and forcefully contradicted several statements made by Mother Bloor. The



next meeting was held at Crosby, where the Legion and Auxiliary attended for the same purpose. Not only was Mrs. Bloor sufficiently intimidated, so that her meeting was called "very tame" but the Communists have never attempted to hold another meeting in Divide County.

What happened in Burke County when the Communists made big plans to hold a two-day anti-memorial day demonstration? The Legion Posts of the Fifth District staged the biggest peace-time patriotic meeting ever held in that section of the state and the Communist meeting was a total failure. Then you have the secret of stopping Communist meetings. Alertness on the part of our Legion posts and Auxiliary units will solve the problem. There is too, the problem of rural children. The Communists admit that they can do very little with the city children, due in a large measure to the fact that the city children have been firmly grounded in patriotic work, but our rural children have not been so fortunate.

When our committee was out in the northwestern part of the state, several schools were visited in Burke County; a talk on the flag was given--not an address but a simple lesson on the flag--and an announcement was made at that time that a flag and copies of the flag code would be sent to each school. This follow-up work was done at a cost of \$5.75. The committee has received about 135 letters from pupils and teachers and I wish you could read these letters. They express in a most eloquent manner that our young people are inherently patriotic and respond wonderfully to patriotic instruction. But such statements as "I didn't know how much our flag stood for," "I didn't know how I could show respect for the flag," "I have heard people talk bad about the flag; I am going to tell them it is wrong to do that," "I have learned so much from the flag code," "I wish you would come again," prove that such work is very much needed. The teachers all wrote us they thought the work was very much worthwhile. I am going to read an extract from one letter from a teacher of a school located in a hot bed of Communism.

"Truly I think your work here did more good than any work of this kind that has been presented in my two years here. There is a very unpatriotic element here. Their children were among the most attentive. I believe it made an impression. One of these girls told me your talk was not long enough. She, I am sure, was most benefitted. I believe this practice should be continued, if possible as a visitor is listened to more than anyone they know real well. I think it would be wonderful if the Auxiliary would meet in the school that have Young Citizens Leagues and help put on one of their programs."

If our members would go out these schools and put on simple programs of music, flag education, plays, patriotic readings, or other work; if the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops could be formed among these rural children, in a word, if our Americanism program could be extended to our rural schools, we could absolutely stop Communism. If every time the Communists advertised a meeting the Legion and Auxiliary unit in that community could stage a better meeting, as they did at Flaxton, there would be precious few Communist meetings held in our state. If every rural school could have a visit from a patriotic squad from our posts and units, say about twice a year, there would be precious few Pioneers saluting the flag in this state.

The Communists are in our state as they are in the United States because we are apathetic, we have forgotten that "eternal vigilance is the price of enduring liberty." The red flag has been allowed to drape caskets and receive the salute of the boys and girls in our very midst because we have overlooked the importance of flag education. Can you conceive of these things happening during the war? Isn't it a sad commentary on United States citizenship that our patriotism is something that will rise to high heights during war and sink to low levels of indifference during peace?

The trouble is there are so many people who are indifferent, who say "why get excited about it--Communism will die out." Surely Communism will die out, but before it does, it will leave a group of Pioneers, a few Communist Leagues, United Farmers leagues here and there in our state--nuclei of discontent. The longer Communism is allowed to stay in our state, the more of these groups there will be, and the more nuclei of discontent we have in North Dakota, the harder it is going to be for the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary to "safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy."



APPENDIX B  
 REPORT OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES  
 IN NORTH DAKOTA  
 1930-32  
 COMPILED BY  
 AMERICANISM COMMITTEE  
 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
 DEPARTMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA

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## Report of Communist Survey in North Dakota

### Americanism Aims of the American Legion Auxiliary and Communism

One of the service objectives of the American Legion Auxiliary is that of Americanism, a program which has for its aim the making of better citizens--the raising of the standard of citizenship. In this work the American Legion Auxiliary is not alone, for that is the aim of education, and the aim of a large number of patriotic and service organizations. There are, on the other hand, a few groups whose object is to break down the standard of citizenship of the country, so that if patriotic organization and the schools are to be successful in their work of making better citizens, they must counteract the work of these subversive organizations.

### Beginning of Communism in North Dakota

#### Mabel Husa, Flag desecration

About two years ago North Dakota citizens were shocked to learn that one of its own citizens had been arrested at a Communist summer camp on a flag desecration charge. Mabel Husa, of Belden, North Dakota, one of the directors of a Communist camp at Van Etten, New York was arrested on a charge of having refused the American flag, of having spat on the flag and of having said she would "Make a dish rag of it". For this offense she was sentenced to serve ninety days in jail and pay a fine of \$50.00. This sentence was imposed by a justice court of Van Etten, and the sentence was later affirmed by a higher court to which an appeal was taken.

### Communist ticket in 1930 election

Shortly thereafter an announcement was made to the effect that the Communist party would enter a ticket in the general election. Ella Reeve Bloor, also known as "Mother" Bloor and also as Mrs. Andrew Omholt, was announced as campaign manager. In a Communist booklet issued by the Central committee of the Communist Party of the United States, entitled "America's Working women and the Class Struggle" we find this reference to Ella Reeve Bloor:

"The labor movement has produced such figures as Ella Reeve Bloor (Mother Bloor) who has carried the message of revolutionary organization to white and colored workers of the North, West, East and South."

Certificates of nomination signed by over 300 electors were filed with the Department of State for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Commissioner of Labor and Agriculture, Secretary of State, Representations in Congress from the Second and Third Districts and for Senate and House of the Legislative Assembly as follows:

*Handwritten signature*

Governor--P. J. Barret, Sanish  
 Lieutenant Governor--Charles Hill, Belden  
 Secretary of State--K. P. Loesch, Montpelier  
 Commissioner of Labor & Agriculture--James Pearson, White  
 Earth  
 2nd Cong. District--Alfred Knutson, Bismarck  
 3rd Cong. District--Andrew Omholt, Minot  
 44th Legislative District--Sophia Husa, Belden  
 Otto Matiskainen, Van Hook  
 Arvo Husa, Belden

Following the election, at which the total Communist vote for governor was 5754 votes, very little was reported of their activities, here and there an occasional meeting. Since the very first report of Communist activities in the state, the American Legion Auxiliary of this Department has had their work under observance but during the winter and spring of 1930-31 nothing was reported that caused any real concern.

#### The Drought and Communism in North Dakota

Then this state, already hard hit by the general economic depression, was the victim of the most cruel and widespread drought in its history. It was only to be expected that with such a field, the Communists would again resume their activities. That is the history of Communism--where there is suffering, unemployment, disturbances of any kind, there you will find active Communists. Information began coming in to the Americanism Committee of the Auxiliary from Unit members, Department officers, newspaper reports and other sources that the communists were steadily gaining ground and that the matter was causing the people in the Northwestern section of the state considerable concern. It was felt that the matter would at least bear investigation.

#### Preliminary Investigation

State organization part of national and international organization  
 The first thing the Americanism Committee sought to find out was:

Is the Communist party active in the state a part of the national and international Communist party? and

What are the aims and beliefs of the Communists working in North Dakota?

In order to get this information, the Americanism Chairman sent a request to the Communist headquarters at Minot, North Dakota, for material which they were distributing and the following pamphlets were received:



Why Every Worker Should Join the Communist Party  
 Election Platform of the Communist Party  
 Socialist Competition in the Soviet Union  
 Another War Coming  
 The Soviet War on Religion  
 The Continuous Working Week  
 Russian Women in the Building of Socialism  
 Out of a Job  
 America's Working Women and the Class Struggle

In addition to the above named pamphlets, copies of the 1930 election handbills of the Communist party were received. Since the receipt of this first material, Unit members have sent in to the Americanism Chairman considerable material distributed at Communist meetings, including two pamphlets:

Who Are the Young Communists, and  
 Communist Call to the Toiling Farmers

The Department Executive Board authorized the Americanism Committee to subscribe for The Producer News, called the official organ of the United Farmers League (farmers' organization of the Communist party) and The Bowbells Tribune. The Producers News, published at Plentywood, Montana, is the official newspaper for the northwest, and The Bowbells Tribune's editorial policy is friendly to the Communists and gives them considerable publicity.

These sources of information revealed the fact the organization established in the state of North Dakota was a part of the national and international party. The pamphlet entitled

"Why Every Worker Should Join the Communist Party" states

"The Communist Party of the United States is a section of the World Party of the Working Class--the Communist International. . . Every workers who joins the Communist Party undertakes the obligation to actively work to carry all the party policies into effect wherever he may be."

A letter signed by Andrew Omholt, District Organizer, dated Jan. 26, 1932 is headed:

Communist Party USA  
 District #11  
 Minot, N. D.

Aims and beliefs of Communists as expressed in literature distributed in state.

The Fundamental aim of the Communists is REVOLUTION.

Their ultimate hope is to overthrow the capitalistic form of government in the United States and establish a government patterned after that of the Soviet Union. The following quotations from booklets distributed by the party in North Dakota bring out this fact:

"Why Every Worker Should Join the Communist Party"

"The program of the Communist Party leads the struggles of the workers clear up the final struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the workers' government--the proletarian dictatorship."

"Election Platform of the Communist Party USA"

"The organized ranks of our own class, led by the revolutionary general staff of the proletariat, led by the Communist International, can defeat the dictatorship of the bosses and replace it with a proletarian democracy."

The 1930 North Dakota election handbill contained:

"We Communists do not hesitate to declare that we fight for a workers' Soviet government as against the capitalist democracy in America. Our aim is to establish a proletarian dictatorship in America."

Demands leading up to revolution.

To lead up this final struggle they must develop an attitude among its followers that the government owes them everything, and since North Dakota is an agricultural state, the demands are such as would appeal to farmers.

1930 North Dakota election handbill:

"as measures for immediate help to the poor working farmers, the Communist Party demands:

extended moratorium on all farm loans,  
immediate reduction of all shipping rates on farm products,  
immediate suspension of interest payments on farm loans,  
remitting of all taxes of poor working farmers, etc."

"Who Are the Young Communists?"



"The Young Communist League demands for its young workers:

immediate unemployment insurance at full wages to all workers, including all youth,  
 appropriations sufficient to provide relief to every young unemployed worker,  
 no evictions of young workers living in boarding houses, YMCA's, etc.,  
 free rent, gas, light and water for all unemployed workers,  
 free food, clothing and school supplies to all workers' children and working class students,  
 no young worker to receive less than \$20.00 a week, etc.

A youth conference held at the Belden Hall, Belden, North Dakota on Sat. Feb. 22nd, is reported in the March 4th issue of The Producer News with the following heading:

"Demand Free Dental Care and Medical Attention. United Farmers League, Youth Section, Conference organizes fight for demands of farm youth."

Seek to destroy respect for law.

To prepare its followers for the revolution, they must develop a lack of respect for law. "Committees of action" are named in their United Farmers Leagues for the purpose of calling together mobs of farmers to take the law into their own hands, and a headline in the Dec. 25th, 1931 issue of The Producer News reads as follows:

"ILLEGAL becomes LEGAL through mass militant protest by small and middle farmers."

A meeting at Flaxton, North Dakota, December 18th adopted the following resolution, and a report of the meeting stated that this resolution received the most enthusiastic approval:

"In case the county commissioners and the state legislature do not meet our demands (these demands included among other things a demand for a law cancelling all personal property taxes for all time) resolved that we will use whatever means necessary to keep our property regardless of the law."

They attempt to instill a lack of respect for everything connected with the government. The Hoover administration is repeatedly called by The Producers News the "Hoover Hunger Movement" and the opening of Congress is described in the January 29th issue as follows:



"On December 7th the Hoover Hunger government was barricaded behind the greatest slaughter machine ever assembled in Washington."

At least two booklets:

"Who are the Young Communists" and  
"Another War Coming" contain the following headings:

"Democracy is a farce."

They seek to weaken family ties.

If they are to be successful in their establishment of a Communist form of government, they must weaken family ties, and this fact is brought out in the following pamphlets distributed in this state:

"Continuous Working Week in the Soviet Union"

"The cornerstone of Soviet life is not the family. the life of the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union does not center around the narrow confines of the family, with its pettiness, but around collective activities. Great steps have been taken to keep up with the demands of the workers for institutions which will enable them to live collectively."

"Russian Women in the building of Socialism"

"The Communist Party has succeeded in establishing the conviction that household drudgery and the individual upbringing of children are only relics from the old order of society."

They seek to destroy reverence for God, for there must be no other God but Communism.

"Continuous Working Week in the Soviet Union."

"Another result of the adoption of the continuous working week is the elimination of Sunday as a general holiday thereby taking away from the remnants of the Church in the Soviet Union one of its last footholds. . . Among the backward strata of the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union there are still people who cling to old religious prejudices. . . but doing away with Sunday as a general holy day, will contribute a great deal to give these remnants a hard blow.

"The Soviet War on Religion"

"The workers of the U.S.S.R. are becoming convinced that they can build a better life without a belief in the supernatural, and they are building it."

In the Youth Section of The Producers News, Jan. 15th issue, a letter was published from a school child in Soviet Russia which contained the following quotation:

"In addition to study, we carry on social work and are members of voluntary societies such as the Militant Atheist Society."

Two communist funerals have been held in this section of the country. One was held at the Belden Hall, Belden, North Dakota and one at Plentywood, Montana. Funeral talks were given by Communist leaders, there were no religious rites of any kind, and the bodies were buried in unconsecrated ground. Following the ceremony, the Young Pioneers gathered around the grave, and pledged allegiance to the Red Flag.

They openly call for a defense of the Soviet Union.

The importance of that demand is evidenced by the fact that in every single pamphlet sent out by the Communist party in North Dakota there is a demand for this defense or a warning that the capitalistic forces are planning to attack the Soviet Union:

"Why Every Worker Should Join the Communist Party."

"Workers of all countries must fight with all possible measures and weapons to defeat the imperialist and defend the Soviet Union."

"Who are the Young Communists?"

"It is the duty of every young worker to defend the Soviet Union."

"Out of a Job."

"Link up the struggle with a campaign for defense of the Soviet Union."

"Another War Coming."

"The defense of the Soviet Union by the workers of all lands is therefore a necessary measure of defense of their position at home."

"Communist Call to the Toiling Farmers."



"War is being prepared especially against the Soviet Union. . because the capitalists of the whole world wish to destroy the Soviet Power for fear their own toilers will be inspired to follow the Soviet."

"Russian Women in the Building of Socialism"

"Far beyond Soviet Russia's frontiers rings the news of socialist construction, filling the workers of capitalist countries with courage and strength. They will be ready to protect the fatherland of all workers."

"Election Platform of the Communist Party USA."

"The workers must support the Soviet Union."

"Socialist Competition in the Soviet Union."

"We must continue our activities by campaigns for the support and defense of the Soviet Union."

"The Soviet War on Religion."

"Stand by the Soviet Union."

"The Continuous Working Week."

"Become a member of the Friends of the Soviet Union."

The Producers News devotes a considerable portion of each issue to the spreading of its "War scare" propaganda. On the front page of the March 25th issue, is found an inch headline: "PLAN TO ATTACK USSR IN SPRING." In the Feb. 12th issue of this same paper there was a two-page editorial on this same subject:

Foremost in the attack on the Chinese masses is the Hoover Hunger government, the brutal terror agency of the Wall Street robbers. The greatest battle fleet concentration of the United States is being gathered in the Pacific. The chiefs of the navy have stated that the fleet would be prepared "FOR ANY EMERGENCY." This "emergency" is the joint attack of all the imperialists on the Soviet Union. Wall Street is preparing to sacrifice millions of workers and farmers lives and the lives of their wives and children in the attempt to crush our Soviet Union, our heritage and our hope. Against this program of blood and of carnage we must rouse the toiling farm masses to struggle in solidarity with the workers in the cities. Organize for the defense of the Soviet Union, our workers and farmers father land." Schools and patriotic organizations are denounced.



All organizations working to instill patriotism and religion and to build better citizens are openly denounced:

"Who are the Young Communists"

"The government realizes that it is necessary to train the youth to be humble and loyal slaves of the boss class. This is accomplished by systematic poisoning of the minds of the children and youth. This process is called education. In the schools is where the youth get their first injection of poison. Histories are rewritten to suit Wall Street. American presidents and businessmen are transformed into saints. The American government and flag are made to represent all that is good and fine. Education does not, however, end with the schools. Newspapers, churches, movies and radio all peddle the same poison to the minds of the youth. The Amateur Athletic Union, The YMCA, The YWCA, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, The Boys' Club Federation and many other organizations are openly financed and controlled by the bosses. They give money to these organizations only because they recognize in them a means by which to fool the young workers."

The Producers News, Feb. 26, 1932

"Preparing the Boy Scouts for the attack on the Toiling masses. The Boy Scouts will be mobilized to act as messenger service of the military forces of the capitalist class."

The Producers News, March 4, 1932

"The 4 H's are supposed to stand for head, heart, hand and health, but does it do anything for our health? The 4-H Club does not! A thousand times no!

Letters of inquiry to people in state.

Having been convinced that the Communist party working in North Dakota was a part of the national and international party, and that the aims and purposes were absolutely antagonistic to American ideals, the Americanism Committee proceeded to attempt to find out how much of a headway they had succeeded in making in this state. In order to know just where to carry on an investigation, the election returns of 1930 were carefully studied. It was found that the total vote received by the Communist candidate for governor was 5754 votes. Nine counties in the state registered a vote of 5% or more its total vote for governor for the Communist candidate:

Bottineau County	184 votes	5 % of total vote
McLean	229	5
Rolette	116	5

Slope	61	5
Bowman	103	7
McKenzie	184	7
Williams	288	7
Burke	275	10
Mountrail	535	11

At no time did the committee believe that because there were 5754 votes cast, there were 5754 Communists in the state. Part of this vote can no doubt be attributed to the fact that it was a protest vote, and many of the voters were undoubtedly misled by the glowing promises which the Communist party made. The only information given on the ballot itself was that each candidate was listed "Communist Party, Workers-Farmers Government", and the Committee is of the opinion that this too proved to be vote-getter in many instances. However, while the results of the election survey was not a true indication of the number of Communists, it was used as a basis upon which to work. And that it was a fair basis upon which to work is brought out by the fact that in the counties where the vote had been the heaviest, the Committee found the most activities, and in fact in these counties and in only these counties did they find organized groups of Communists.

Letters of inquiry were sent out to Unit presidents in the nine counties registering the heaviest vote. Three questions were asked:

1. Are the Communists active in your locality?
2. Are they holding meetings or distributing literature?
3. What is the reaction to their work in your community?

#### Action of Executive Board

While the survey was still incomplete, but after having received enough replies and information to be convinced that there was considerable activity, and after the Committee had been assured by many unit members and other contacted that the condition was serious enough to warrant some consideration, this partial report was submitted to Executive Board of the Department of the American Legion Auxiliary. A recommendation was made by the Board that a further and more complete investigation should be made, and which investigation, and the funds were appropriated out of the Child Welfare Fund, the recommendation of the Board reading as follows:

"Since Child Welfare can be justly divided into Educational and material relief, and in view of existing conditions requiring education in American ideals, we recommend that \$250.00 of our Child Welfare fund be made available to the Americanism and national Defense Chairman to carry forward her program."



A plan was worked out whereby the Auxiliary would send a committee into this section of the state, get first hand information as to conditions, schedule meetings with the Auxiliary Units wherever possible and if arrangements could be worked out, give patriotic talks in the rural schools where the Communists were found to be particularly active. This plan with a report of conditions was submitted to the State Department of Education and to Governor Shafer.

Having secured the enthusiastic approval and cooperation of Miss Palmer, of the State Department of Education, and Governor Shafer, a committee was named to conduct the survey--Mrs. J.D. Stenson, District Committeewoman of the Fifth District and Mrs. E.C. Geelan, Department Americanism Chairman.

### PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

#### General summary of trip

Nine days were spent in this personal investigation, and practically every minute of every day, from 8:30 A.M. to 12 P.M. was spent in interviews, meetings and visiting schools. Four counties were covered: Burke, Divide, Mountrail and Ward in North Dakota and Sheridan County, Montana. Sheridan County was included in the survey because The Producers News is published at Plentywood, Sheridan County and a Communist School was held at Plentywood during 1931, at which several North Dakota children were enrolled. Considerable time was spent in several cities in these counties, and in communities where the Communists were reported as being active, these cities being Bowbells, Flaxton, Columbus, and Powers Lake in Burke County; Crosby in Divide County; Stanley, Belden, Van Hook and Parshall in Mountrail County; Minot in Ward County and Westby and Plentywood in Sheridan County, Montana. At five of these places meetings were held with the Auxiliary Units and Legions Posts: Bowbells, Crosby, Stanley, Van Hook and Minot. In only one county could arrangements be made to give patriotic talks in the rural schools, that being Burke County and seven schools were visited: Clayton Consolidated School, Bowbells; Scandia School #1, Flaxton; Rural School #3, Flaxton; Rural School #4 Flaxton; High View School #2, Powers Lake; Battle View School #1, McGregor; Short Creek Consolidated School, Portal. Two high school assemblies were addressed: Bowbells High School and Crosby High School.

As a result of this investigation, both the preliminary and personal survey, the following information was received.

#### Communist Meetings:

Public meetings have been held by the Communists in the state, covering an eight month period--September 1931 to April 1932.



Burke County:	Bowbells	3 meetings reported
	Flaxton	1
	Larson	2
	Powers Lake	1
	Clayton	1
	Columbus	1
Dickey	Forbes	1
Divide	Crosby	1
	Noonan	1
McLean	Max	2
Mountrail	Belden	5
	White Earth	2
	Sanish	1
	Parshall	1
	Blaisdell	1
	Stanley	4
Ward	Minot	10
	Foxholm	1
Williams	Epping	1
	Ray	1
	Williston	3
Grand Forks	Grand Forks	1
Burleigh	Bismarck	1

These meetings have been general meetings, meetings to boost the subscription lists of The Producers News, meetings at which Sender Garlin, representative of the United Farmers League and the International Defenders, spoke and exhibited pictures of conditions in Soviet Russia (Defense of the Soviet Union openly declared the keynote of these meetings), anti-war demonstrations and Communist-socialist debates. Many of these meetings have been held in public halls, some in school houses, and court houses, but in almost every community they are now being denied the use of anything but private halls. Many of these meetings were open street meetings. In Minot they are not allowed to hold their open air meetings on anything but private lots. As nearly as the Committee could discover there is only one school house at which meetings are held at the present time, and that matter is being referred to the State Department of Education. At Belden they have a town hall which is used for their meetings.

Communist literature is sold and distributed at most of the meetings and Communist doctrines are openly discussed and advocated. If the audience is known to be rather hostile to Communism, care is taken by the leaders not make the talks too radical. As an example: a Communist meeting was held at Noonan, Divide County. The Legion members were in attendance, and quietly but forcefully contradicted several statements made by "Mother" Bloor. The next meeting was held at Crosby,

where the Legion and Auxiliary attended for the same purpose. One of the Auxiliary members described the meeting as follows:

"Mother Bloor was very careful what she said here, as the Legion and Auxiliary were out in full force to protest against anything she might say. She did not give anyone a chance to ask questions here, as the Legion in Noonan had called her on several statements. The boys from Noonan said her talk here was tame compared to the one there. Her talk at Crosby was mostly on why we have hard times, and blaming the capitalists and our President and high officials. Just hints, and picturing Russia as the only perfect place."

As a result of the activities of the Legion and Auxiliary, no further meetings have been held in Divide County. A county official of Divide County, who is close to the situation, said the Legion and officials are watching the agitators very closely and doing all they can to see that the Red seeds do not get beyond the sprouting state. At many of the meetings, however, revolution is openly advocated. When Mrs. Bloor was questioned at meeting at Columbus, Burke County, as to whether the Communists expected to accomplish their aims through legislation, she answered "that way is too slow, but we think we can accomplish our aims with very little bloodshed." At a meeting at Minot one of the Auxiliary members who attended the meeting reported that the talk was for the most part on organizing the young people to be ready for the next year, but instead of being tools for the capitalists, they knew whom they were going to strike.

#### Organized groups of Communists in North Dakota.

The Communist party has a large number of subsidiary organizations, groups appealing to various trades, and ages, such as the United Farmers League, Youth section of the United Farmers League, Young Communist League, Pioneers, Labor Sports Union, etc.

#### United Farmers League.

Since North Dakota is an agricultural state, this is the organization that is stressed in this state. A number of these leagues have been organized, and the Communist newspaper, The Producers News, is the official organ of the United Farmers League. It is called by The Producers News a "militant" organization and openly advocates taking whatever action is necessary to hold their property regardless of the law. Ella Reeve Bloor is state organizer of the United Farmers League in North Dakota. Reports were given the Committee of such organizations in Burke, Mountrail and Ward counties. In at least two of these counties a county organization has been perfected, Burke and Ward. J.C. Zaharee, Secretary of the Ward County United farmers League reports that the "work is well started in southern Ward County and also in the vicinity of Max."



The United Farmers League and the Farmers Union. In a few places where there is overlapping memberships in these two organizations, the United Farmers league members of the Farmers Unions have been successful in having resolutions passed supporting the United Farmers league. Instances were related to the Committee that after a meeting of the Farmers Union, a meeting would be immediately called of the United Farmers League. In many places, however, the Farmers Union locals vigorously oppose any attempts of Communist members to introduce Communist propaganda. While the Farmers Union at its last meeting at Minot passed a resolution to the effect that no Communist literature was to be distributed, Ella Reeve Bloor reported in The Producers News, Dec. 25th issue, "two members of the Farmers Union, disregarding this resolution, distributed free of charge a number of copies of the Communist Call to the Toiling Farmers, a big bundle of Daily Workers--all of which were eagerly taken by the Farmers present."

#### Youth Section, United Farmers League.

A report from Sanish, dated Feb. 22nd, announced a conference was held by the United Farmers League, Youth Section, and further reports that because of the bad roads the attendance was not as large as it should have been, but several townships were represented. Another meeting of this organization was held at Belden, March 12th. A series of anti-war demonstrations were held at Williston, Minot, White Earth, Belden and Larson, on April 6th and both the United Farmers League and the Youth Section of the United Farmers League participated in these meetings.

#### Young Communist League.

The Communist pamphlet "Who Are the Young Communists" has this to say of the Young Communist League:

"The Young Communist League is the organization of young workers that leads the fight against the danger of another bosses war, and for the defense of the Soviet Union. The Young Communist League is not a pacifist organization. It teaches the young workers that when war is declared, they must turn their guns against their only enemy, the boss class. . . The Young Communist League joins hands with the Communist youth of all lands through affiliation in that mighty revolutionary youth organization, the Young Communist International."

Young Communist Leagues are reported in both Burke and Mountrail County. The last one to be formed according to the information in the hands of the Committee was at Powers Lake, Burke County, where the organization meeting was held March 28, 1932. This group reported the following plan of action: every member bring a member to the next meeting, April 15th. The Producers News, April 15th issue, reports that as a result of the anti-war meetings in North Dakota, April 6th, a number of applicants were turned in for the Young Communist League.



A Young Communist League School was held in Plentywood, Montana, during the months of November and December 1931, with graduation exercises on December 19th. A businessman of Plentywood reported that two-thirds of the students. A number of businessmen interviewed at Plentywood were of the opinion that the school received part of its financial support from outside sources, although the school was supposed to be supported by the farmers of Sheridan County. A training school for Young Communists is now being conducted in Minneapolis, and students are reported from North Dakota.

#### Pioneers.

This is the organization for the very young communists. Every issue of The Producers News has a Pioneer Section, and numerous communications are printed from Pioneer organizations in Mountrail County. Three "squads" are reported at Belden, "The Weasels" the "Red Peps" and the "Coyotes". The Pioneers are repeatedly urged to draw members from the Boy Scouts and 4-H Clubs into their own organization.

#### Pioneer Summer Camps.

An attempt is being made to sponsor summer camps in District #11, which comprises North Dakota and South Dakota and Montana. Two conferences were called for the purpose of deciding on a uniform program for all camps, and an announcement was made that a number of these camps may organized in District #11 for the coming summer. These conferences were held at Williston, March 20 and Belden on April 10th. The results of these conferences have not been learned.

#### Labor Sports Union.

This is the athletic organization for the Young Communists. At least two such organizations are known to be in existence in the state, one at Belden and one at Epping.

#### The Producers News.

Numerous references have been made in the foregoing pages of this report to this publication. The importance to the Communists of this newspaper is evidenced by the fact that a series of meetings were held in practically every section where there were any active Communists to boost the subscription list of the paper. This paper is self-styled "Official Organ of the United Farmers League". Two subscription rates are quoted on the inside page: National Edition and County Edition and The Producers News of Plentywood is designated as the County Edition. In the last statement of ownership, Erick Bert is named as editor, Hans Rasmusen as Business Manager.

Among the owners we find Charles (Red Flag) Taylor and other active Communists. For the last three or four months The Producers News has been conducting a strenuous campaign for more subscribers. Each week it has published "Doings of the Advance Guard", which is a list of workers who are sending in subscriptions for this paper. A study of this column for the months of January, February and March reveals the following facts:

Number of workers in North Dakota	37
Number of communities represented	19
Number of counties represented	10

These orders for subscriptions range from 3 to 12 sent in at one time by one individual. A large number of them are short term subscriptions. Many requests are sent in by these workers for samples and bundles of the paper for free distribution of the paper at group meetings of farmers, conventions, etc. The Frederick Cooperative Association of Frederick, South Dakota (a few miles south of Dickey County, North Dakota) sent in a check for \$134.00 to pay for a six-months subscription to The Producers News for each one of its stockholders and principal patrons. People contacted at Plentywood were quite convinced that The Producers News had doubled its outside subscriptions during the last six months, and were equally convinced (although there was no means of confirming their suspicions) that the paper received financial support from outside sources, that is, outside of their subscription revenue, since the paper has a negligible amount of advertising, and only an occasional advertisement appears in the issues. Several people told the Committee they had sent in copies to the federal government in an attempt to have the paper denied the use of the mails, but no action has been taken by the government.

### 1932 Election.

An announcement has already been made to the effect that there will be a Communist ticket in the field in the 1932 election. It is believed that a strong attempt will be made by the Communists to poll enough votes in this election to secure a place on the ballot as a recognized political party. Most people in the communities visited were of the opinion that they will not receive as many votes in this election as they did in 1930, even though they have picked candidates from a wider field. Publicity, especially publicity in regard to the two Communist funerals and their open doctrine of revolution, has not reacted favorably to the Communists.

### Organizers.

Ella Reeve Bloor (Mother Bloor and Mrs. Andrew Omholt) first appeared in the state as campaign manager for the Communist party. She is now the state organizer of the United Farmers League. A reference has been made heretofore in this report as to her work as a Communist leader in other sections of the United States.



Andrew Omholt is the district organizer for the Communist party for District #11, which comprises North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. he is reported as coming from the vicinity of White Earth, North Dakota, but this report could not be confirmed.

Mabel Husa, Belden, who served time in New York on a Flag desecration charge, is a graduate of the Stanley High School and spends most of her time in the state organizing the young people. A sister, Lillian, is doing work of the same kind in South Dakota.

Ashbel Ingerson, Flaxton, North Dakota, has appeared on a number of programs with Ella Reeve Bloor. During the month of March he sent in a subscription to The Producers News from Oklahoma, and stated that the farmers were organized in that state.

Charles (Red Flag) Taylor, one of the owners of The Producers News, has been an active worker in North Dakota, and during the spring of this year was working in northern Minnesota organizing United Farmers Leagues.

All of these workers are reported as being United States citizens.

#### General information gained through interviews.

In every community an attempt was made to interview as many persons as many professions and classes of individuals as possible, in order to get a true and general report of conditions. Special efforts were made to interview officials, state, national and local and in the cases where private citizens were interviewed, these names were given to the Committee by Legion and Auxiliary members as responsible people who were close to the situation. County superintendents of schools, city superintendents of schools, teachers, county nurses, county agents, ministers, editors, general merchants, garage men, Red Cross workers, United States customs officials, mail clerks, and farmers were among those contacted.

In addition to verifying information as to meetings, aim and beliefs of the Communists, activities of various groups, organizers, etc., the interviews yielded the following general information:

For the most part the communists are not people of any prestige in their local communities.

Many of them have always been radicals.

Practically all of them are citizens. Two were reported as aliens, and this information has been turned over to the United State Customs Officials, who have



promised vigorous action against any aliens who are admittedly Communists, and deportation proceedings have been instituted by the Department of Labor in a number of instances in Montana. However, the attitude of the Communists who are citizens is best told in the words of one business man contacted:

"They are citizens in name only, as far as their allegiance to the government, the constitution, the Flag and all our ideals, they are aliens."

They are a class of people who demand everything from the government. They are a source of great aggravation to the Red Cross and local officials in charge of relief work. They are not in the majority in any community, with the exception of one township which was reported to be 100% Communists. They have made a number of attempts to get on school boards and township boards and places on the county tickets, but as far as the Committee could ascertain they are not represented on a single school or township board, nor do they hold any county offices. There have been a few appointments of Communists as Red Cross key men and feed and seed loan township key men.

The belief is general that because Communism has spread as a reaction against the times, when economic conditions improve, Communism will die out. However, it is likewise generally believed that a large number of these Communists will never again be good citizens, and if another depression comes, they will furnish a nucleus for other radical organizations.

#### Communism in North Dakota and the Schools.

The greatest concern of the Committee in this investigation was the schools and school children, and this phase of the investigation received the greatest consideration. In every community, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. Have the Communists gained any headway among the children?
2. Do the children who are organized, or whose parents are Communists attempt to influence other children?
3. Do they bring their Communist beliefs into the schools and school associations?

The discussion of the subsidiary organization so the Communist party will answer the first question. These organizations are limited entirely to rural districts, for the Communists openly admit they can gain no ground among the children of the city schools.

In order to get an answer to the other questions, the most careful investigation was conducted in the vicinity of Belden, where children's organizations of the Communist are known to be in existence and are active. The Legion and Auxiliary

members of Van Hook gave to the committee the names of the farmers living in the vicinity of Belden who are not Communists and who had children attending the schools at which there were known to be Communist children. Without a single exception every farmer and farmer's wife interviewed in this locality told the Committee that attempts had been made and were being made to influence the other children. Teachers and bus drivers verified this report. The Committee was told these children were taught to be aggressive and to spread their propaganda in every way possible. Instances were related to the Committee of how notes were written containing Communist doctrines, and that during class discussion Communist children had tried to voice their beliefs. However, the local people were all agreed that the teachers were very alert, were pushing patriotic work and this facet kept them from being successful to any extent. With three exceptions, all teachers were found to be intensely patriotic, actively combatting the work of Communists. Two teachers were reported as having lost their positions on account of pro-Communist activities and the name of an active teacher has been turned in to the Department of Education for investigation.

A bus driver related of how it took strenuous action to stop Communist discussion on the way from and to school. However, such careful supervision is not possible on the school grounds and considerable apprehension was felt on this score. One farmer expressed the general opinion when he said in answer to the question: "Do you feel there is any danger of the Communist children influencing your children?"

"How can I tell, how can anyone tell whether they have influenced my child? How can I tell until my boy is ready to make decisions for himself whether he has been influenced by this propaganda?"

A mother told the Committee of a Communist child having ridiculed her daughter for going to Sunday School, and of having told her that there was no God. The mother expressed the greatest concern over this matter. A teacher of considerable experience, who has had an opportunity to watch these children, told the committee that the Communists were successful in influencing some children, but where the children came from homes where they had been well grounded in patriotism and religion, they did not succeed. This same teacher told the committee that the regular weekly meetings at Belden were schools of instruction for the children. This report was verified by other people in this locality and as one farmer expressed it:

"They have given up the old people, and are now working on the children, and are using games and socials as means to attract the young people."

In Burke County, through the cooperation of Miss Marvel Anderson, County Superintendent of Schools, a number of rural schools were visited and a talk was given on the Flag. An announcement was made to the children at that time that a



small silk Flag would be sent to the school, and a copy of the Flag Code would be sent to each child. These Flags, with stands, and a copy of the Flag Code was sent to the school a week following the visit. This work was done with very little expense--a total outlay of \$5.75. the teachers were asked to make a special effort to find out what reactions they noted to such work, in order that the Committee might find out whether this work was of any real value.

Letters have been received from the teachers in these schools and every teacher endorses such work enthusiastically. A few quotations are given below from letters received from these teachers:

"I think that the work you are carrying on is of great value. I know the children at my school received a lot of benefit from the talk you gave, and they became much more interested in the history of the Flag. When the Flag arrived they were very excited and have carefully studied the flag Codes."

"I think such work is very much worthwhile. My pupils learned so many things they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to find out."

"Your talk and the Flags and Flag Codes have given the children an added love and interest in the Flag. There had been several Communist meetings out here and I think it was very timely that you came."

"The children are very much more interested in the Flag since they heard your speech."

"Truly, I think you talk here did more good than any work of this kind that has been presented in my two years here. It stayed with the children. I often hear them discussing your visit and comparing it with the things we have mentioned in class. In this community, especially, do I believe that your work is necessary. There is a very unpatriotic element here.. Their children were among the most attentive. I believe it made an impression. One of these girls told me that your talk was not long enough. She, I am sure, was most benefitted. Your talk was an inspiration in their other classes."

One of the fifth grade girls said she wanted to be able to write a better letter if she were to write to you. I believe that this practice should be continued, if possible, as a visitor is listened to more than anyone they know real well. I think it would be wonderful to have the Auxiliary meet in the schools that have Young Citizens; Leagues and help put on one of their programs."

Special ceremonies of presentation with work on Flag Etiquette were held in most of the schools when the Flag Codes were received, and as a follow-up project a language class period was devoted to writing letters to the Committee. It is to be



regretted that these letters cannot be made a part of this report, for they are an inspiration, written with such evident sincerity, and express in a most eloquent manner that our young people are inherently patriotic and respond wonderfully to patriotic instruction. These letters proved that it is through patriotic instruction that we must combat the work of the Communists.

Quotations from these children's letters to the effect:

"I didn't know how much our flag stood for"

"I didn't know how I could show respect for the Flag"

"I didn't know the history of our Flag was interesting."

"I have heard people talk bad about the flag. I am going to tell them that it is wrong to do that."

"I have learned so many things from the Flag Code."

"I wish you would come and tell us more about the Flag"

Recommendations of Committee

Since the presence of the Communists in our state is admittedly a reaction against the present economic depression, against the unequal burden of taxation which the farmers are bearing and against general agricultural conditions, it is believed that prosperity will mean the end of Communism for North Dakota. However, if this prosperity is to be followed by another depression in a few years, and if history repeats itself to the extent that this depression is of greater severity and duration than the present one and if the Soviet Communist state is still in existence, it is generally believed that we may expect something far worse than the present conditions.

It is therefore recommended by the Committee that the American Legion Auxiliary exert its influence to the end that a serious attempt be made by our law makers to find a solution for depression, for problems of taxation and agriculture.

It is further recommended that the members of the American Legion Auxiliary of this department through its citizenship clubs prepare themselves to take intelligent stands on tax reduction, and the solution of our present economic problems.

Because the greatest danger is with the children,

this committee recommends that the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of North Dakota, in cooperation with the American Legion extend its Americanism program to the rural schools:

organizing girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Junior Baseball Leagues among the rural children,

distribute Flag codes, with appropriate exercises. Patriotic squads", combining the musical and dramatic talent in the Units could be organized to visit rural schools giving patriotic programs.

Because a request has been made by the Department of Education of North Dakota for recommendations of the Committee in counteracting the influence of the Communists, this Committee recommends that

Every teacher in the rurals be encouraged to street patriotic work,

The teachers be sent out special instructions to the effect that the Flag must be flown out of doors if the weather permits, and if not, that the Flag must be displayed in the school room.

No Communist meetings be allowed in any school house.

Legislation be recommended to the effect that the distribution of Communist literature or participation in any Communist organization be made a cause for the revoking of a teachers certificate.

The work of the Young Citizens Leagues be stressed in the schools. Out of a total of 330 schools in three counties, only 46 young Citizens Leagues were reported. teachers and school officials are quite generally agreed that the work of the Young citizens League, with its patriotic committee, could be a real force in counteracting the work of the Communists. Various reasons were given for not having more of these leagues: they are voluntary organizations, many teachers are not qualified to conduct such leagues or are not familiar enough with the organization, and that the matter of expense has made it prohibitive in a few cases during the last few years. The committee recommends that more attention be paid to such organization work, at the regular institutes for teachers, the teachers be trained in this work.



APPENDIX C  
PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF AGNES GEELAN INTERVIEW  
JULY 1988

- Geelan: Now, that was kinda interesting. I was in the American Legion Auxiliary. I was Americanism Chairman. I want to show you this. I was Americanism chairman and we heard much about the Communism.
- Overmoe: In North Dakota?
- Geelan: In North Dakota.
- Geelan: In fact, they had a candidate, now what's this, now. They had a candidate for governor. . . We knew they were in the state, the Executive Committee asked the School Board in Enderlin if you can get two weeks off and go and investigate. So I investigated the Communists in 1930 and 32. Two years and this is the report, the only one in existence. But I'm proud of what I say. So I said, this report, let it go to the governor. And go to the Legion Auxiliary but that's all and I said practically all of them are citizens I took all the schools. But anyway my last recommendation is that we don't have anything to fear from them. Prosperity will near the end of Communism in North Dakota.
- Overmoe: These were the counties?
- Geelan: Actually I give the percentages. One county is 15%, isn't it?
- Overmoe: Burke is ten.
- Geelan: Mountrail is 11. I suppose. Just think, that's what I investigated. And this is the only one in the state. I saved this. I thought that was really something.
- Overmoe: And who assigned you to go and investigate?
- Geelan: The Executive Committee of the American Legion Auxiliary. They paid my expenses.
- Overmoe: So you went and investigated voting records.
- Geelan: Well, anyway, then I gave a speech. It was at Devils Lake. And it was in a church. And I talked from a pulpit. And I really was moved and there weren't many dry eyes...when I spoke about this...As soon as we get prosperity it'll disappear. But anytime it's depressed, people start acting up. . . And I was crying and most of the people in the audience. I really felt, this was a great experience.
- Overmoe: It involves fears, isolation.
- Geelan: And, of course, remember, Communists were the people who lost everything. In fact, I never dared tell this I went home I was in the



Senate. And one time I told the senator one time in a meeting about this. He came to me and he said, "I was one of those Communists." If I ever told this, he would have been branded. He said I was at a meeting And Mrs. Bloor she said something "If we don't win peacefully, we'll have to shoot our way out." Boy, he said, I got out of that meeting in a hurry. As fast as I could. That's the kind of people they were. Ultimate aim---revolution. I went up to see her, of course. She was a real good Communist, of course.

Overmoe: Mabel Husa.

Geelan: This was one of the reasons the Executive Committee wanted to investigate.

Overmoe: Belden.

Geelan: And then they had a Communist funeral. Across the line in Montana. And they draped a red flag across the coffin. So that's what's sent me out. Mother Bloor.

Overmoe: Mother Bloor.

Geelan: Oh, You should have seen her. The Drought and Communism in North Dakota. Hit hard by the general economic depression. The Communists would resume activities. That is the history of Communism. Where there is suffering, unemployment, disturbances of any kind, there you will find active Communists. I subscribed to The Daily Worker. So I had whole list of Communists. And when this senator told me he's been one, I went right to my apartment and burned it. I didn't want those names to be known.

Overmoe: A meeting at Flaxton, North Dakota, adopted the following resolutions. In case the county commissioners and the state legislature will not meet our demands, we will use whatever means necessary to keep our property, regardless of the law.

Geelan: Some of these pamphlets are pretty terrible.

Overmoe: Hoover administration is repeatedly called "The Hoover Hunger Movement"

Geelan: This is the information I gave the Executive Committee.

Overmoe: Russian women; destroy reverence for God; on religion; plan attack us in the spring; propaganda it was infiltrating during this time.

Geelan: Why sure, they had a Communist hall and they had what they called YCL, and you know that was Young Citizen League but what it was Young Communist League. Oh yes they were active.

Overmoe: They were active. 1932.

Geelan: 5,754 votes. And here I give the votes.

Overmoe: Burke and Mountrail. Western North Dakota.

Geelan: That's the highest. It wasn't enough to worry about but I told them as soon as prosperity hits, that the end of Communism. At no time did the community believe that they were gonna have 5000 votes cast. They called themselves Communists but they were good American citizens

that just thought this was the way. Gotta keep our farms. I kept The Daily Worker and they kept the North Dakota meetings.

Overmoe: Here's one on Mother Bloor. Communist literature is sold and distributed at most meetings. A Communist meeting was held at Noonan, in Divide County. Legion members were in attendance Mother Bloor was very careful what she said here.

Geelan: The Auxiliary was out in full force to protest anything she might say. One woman told me she had a red flag in one sleeve and the American flag on the other sleeve and she went to one of these meetings. She (Bloor) got up and she said all right which flag are you going to salute? So we had some people who were fighting it.

Overmoe: Pioneer Summer camps. An attempt is being made The Producer News. . .

Geelan: I haven't looked at this for years.

Overmoe: Unbelievable. When hard times strike, what people resort to. Mabel Husa, Belden, who served time in New York on a flag desecration charge is a high school graduate of Stanley High School and spends most of her time organizing the state's young people.

Geelan: I spoke at all the schools and presented small flags.

Overmoe: Teachers and bus drivers verified the reports that children were being made, they were influencing the children. Instances were relayed to the committee and notes containing Communist documents. . . Marvel Anderson, county superintendent, a number of rural schools were visited and a talk was given on the flag. A flag would be sent to each school and a copy of the flag code was given to each child. The Auxiliary still does a lot of that. And then you got the feedback? Teachers?

Geelan: I think we asked them to send something Teachers were asked to make a special effort to find out what reactions were.

Overmoe: Value of work? (Quoting from report) I think the work you are carrying out is of great value. My school received a lot of benefit from the talk you gave. And they became much more interested in the history of the flag. Truly I think your talk here did more good than any work of this kind in my two years here. It stayed with the children. I believe it made an impression because there is an unpatriotic element here. That's what the teacher wrote.

Geelan: Well you know if you were losing your farm and you were on relief. Here comes somebody who says well all you have to do is--- Communism, the idea of Communism is fine. You can understand these people.

Overmoe: Down and out. These are from children. People talk bad about the flag. I am going to tell them it is wrong to do that. Your recommendations are at the end.

Geelan: And that recommendation. That prosperity will end Communism. So surprised to find this.



Overmoe: This is just unreal This is history. This happened.

Geelan: This is history that was kept quiet.

Overmoe: With what's happening today, too. They're grumbling. It's just that the economy dictates people's moods. And the mood isn't too good right now. I don't know if I would want to be running for an office this fall.

Geelan: What I'm going to say in this article. If feel obligated to say something since they picked me out as a hero because of my peace activities.



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